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On the cover:

Primula 'Blue Lace Mary' at Dial Park (*pg 42*).

Photograph: Jason Ingram

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Seize upon the colour and scent of the few plants of interest at this time of year

Early spring is a difficult time for gardeners. We are so eager to get back out there, but the dark and cold, and the unpredictable weather, often scupper our best-laid plans. As a result, we seize upon the colour and scent of the few plants giving interest at this time of year, indulging in flowering bulbs, the stems of cornus, the bark of birches and all the other delights found in **WINTER GARDENS** like the one at Anglesey Abbey (*pg 26*). Most of us don't have this sort of space to play with, but the delightful small garden at Dial Park (*pg 42*) shows you don't have to own acres to inject a little interest into your plot. A good place to start is with Matt Biggs' choice of less-considered **PLANTS FOR EARLY SPRING** (*pg 85*) or a look at exciting new daffodils (*pg 73*).

This issue, we've got the first of a new series on what to grow for posies all year (*pg 69*), and a peek behind the scenes at both **BUNNY GUINNESS**' exquisite home garden (*pg 61*) and the kitchen garden of the two-Michelin-star restaurant at **GLENEAGLES** (*pg 91*). We also reveal our shortlist for the **FUTURE FUND** (*pg 53*) - see which gardening project you think deserves the funding, and then vote for your choice on our website.

Stay warm out there, and happy gardening,

Stephanie

Stephanie Mahon, Editor



JOHN CAMPBELL

Send off today for your 6 free dahlia tubers - see pg 95*

FIND US ONLINE

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR FEATURES & VIDEOS: There's lots more at **www.theenglishgarden.co.uk**

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VISIT OUR HOME GARDEN: Stockton Bury reopens on 1 April 2015. See our video tour of the garden in summer at **www.theenglishgarden.co.uk/magazine**

*JUST PAY POSTAGE



JOHN CAMPBELL

What's Tamsin been up to at our home garden?

With only weeks to go until the garden opens for the National Gardens Scheme, Editor-at-large Tamsin is eager to get the garden looking its best. 'So many of our precious plants are starting to show signs of accelerated growth, and I'm keeping an eye on the forecast for late frost. Buds such as magnolias are at risk, so I keep some fleece at the ready. It's a really exciting time of year with so much promise - there is still time to plant and plan, so anything is possible this month.' See Tamsin's practical tasks for March, including lawn care tips, on pg 17.

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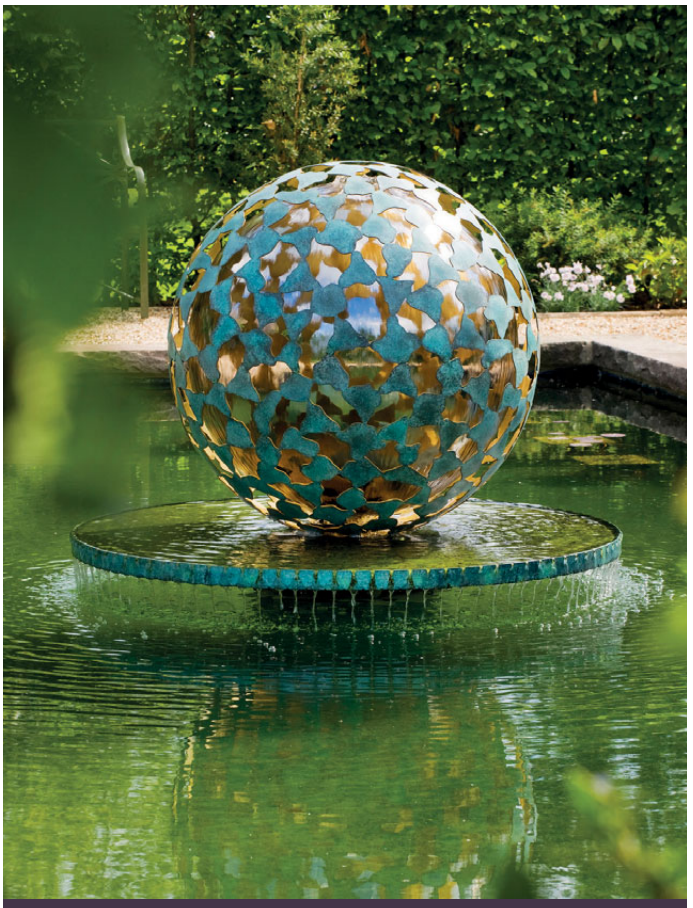
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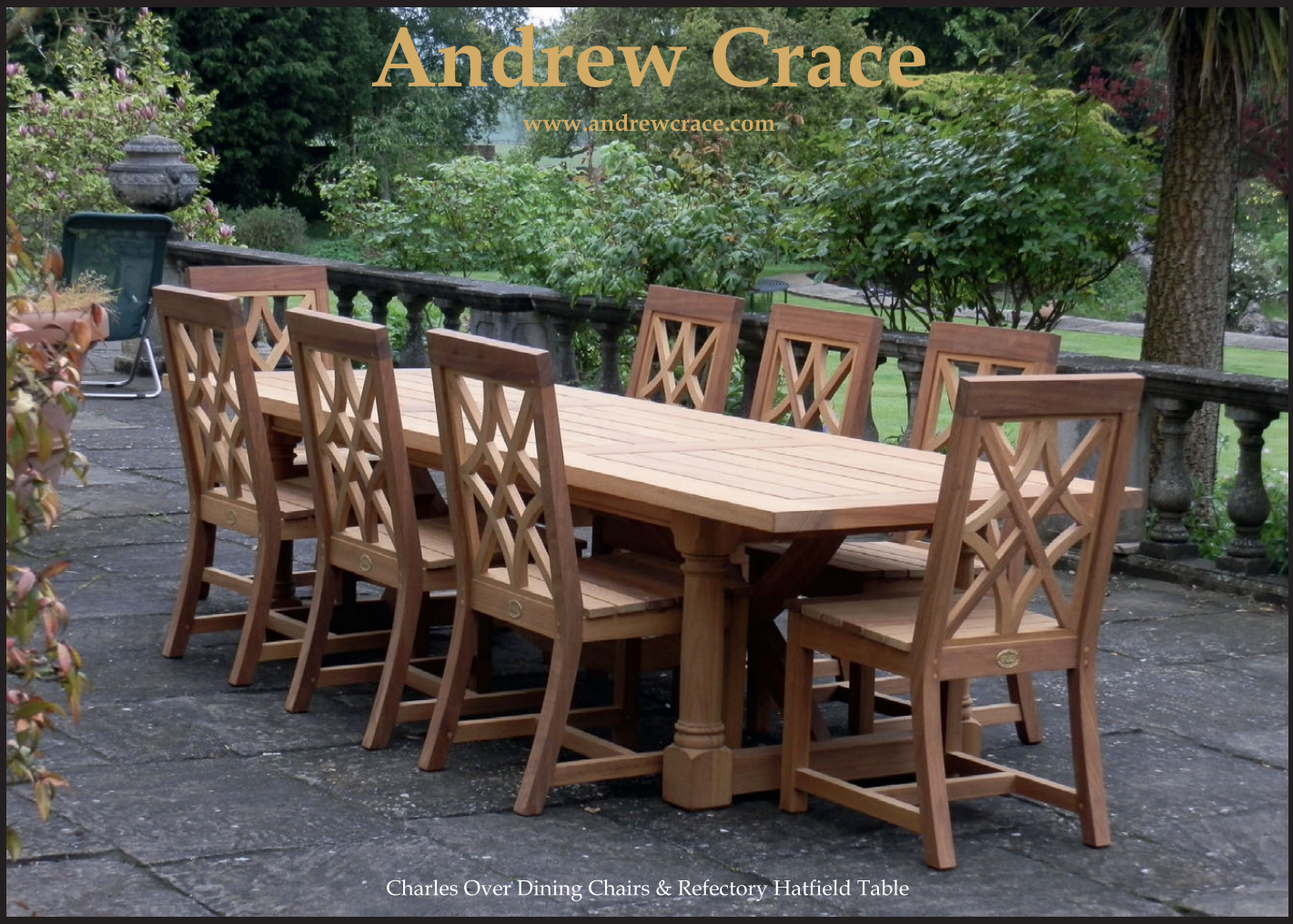
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A SPRING IN YOUR STEP

If you're ready for some colour, then a visit to Lacock Abbey in Wiltshire is a must. You'll be met by carpets of crocuses near the Fox Talbot Museum, in a spot that overlooks surrounding fields and a wonderful view of the abbey. Blooming starts in late February until the middle of March with the added bonus of daffodils appearing in early March. This area of the garden was first planted by William Henry Fox Talbot, inventor of the photographic negative and a keen botanist, in the early 19th century. 'At first it was a small area,' explains Kristine Heuser, marketing and communications officer. 'Over the last 175 years, the plants have been allowed to spread naturally, leaving most of the ground covered in purple.' Enjoy special National Gardens Scheme days on 25 and 28 February at 10.30am-5.30pm, as well as guided walks with the head gardener on 11 and 24 February at 11.30am. Lacock, near Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2LG. Tel: +44 (0)1249 730459. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

IMAGE NATIONAL TRUST IMAGES – MARK BOLTON

NEWS & EVENTS

Sue Bradley digs up the latest stories in the gardening world, including wild daffodil visits, and plans to restore one of the country's few surviving iron-framed curved glasshouses

Mug up!



Enjoy a brew and be reminded when to sow and harvest different vegetables with this 'Growing Planner' mug (£7.50). Award-winning garden designer Paul Hervey-Brookes has designed these mugs to raise funds for the charity Gardening Leave which uses horticultural therapy to help troubled Armed Forces veterans. Visit stores.ebay.co.uk/gardeningleavecharity



More daffodils on pg 73

5 places for wild daffodils

● DUNSFORD, DEVON
Head for east Dartmoor to find a riverside woodland that boasts one of the finest displays of native daffodils in Britain. www.devonwildlifetrust.org

● DYMOCK, OXENHALL AND KEMPLEY, GLOUCESTERSHIRE
Discover daffodil-rich fields and woodlands around Gloucestershire's 'Golden Triangle'. Time your visits to coincide with organised walks and 'daffodil teas', taking place in Kempley on Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 March; in Oxenhall on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 March; and in Dymock on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 March. www.gloucestershirewildlifetrust.co.uk

● FARNDALE, NORTH YORKSHIRE
Wild daffodils festoon the River Dove's banks at Farndale. www.facebook.com/FarndaleDaffodilValley

● ULLSWATER, CUMBRIA
Visit Glencoyne Bay on the shores of Ullswater, whose wild daffodils inspired Wordsworth's famous poem (www.visitcumbria.com), or take a trip to Willington Woods near Ulverston (www.wildzonecumbria.org). And don't miss the wild daffodils at Howe Ridding Wood Nature Reserve at Whitbarrow (www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk) and Sizergh Castle near Kendal (www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

● WAKEHURST, SUSSEX
Be dazzled by the glorious spring flowers for which Wakehurst is renowned (*above*) and enjoy the coloured stems of birches in Bethlehem Wood. www.kew.org

True bricks

Volunteers from the Gibside landscape garden, in Tyne and Wear, have painstakingly cleaned more than 10,000 bricks from a collapsed section of garden wall (*right*). Their hard work has saved the National Trust some £20,000, but the charity still needs to find £650,000 to pay for the almost 300-year-old wall to be returned to its former glory, along with other works. Gibside is one of several properties at the heart of a £2 million National Trust appeal to rescue and restore walled gardens. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/gibside



IMAGES/WAKEHURST - RBG KEW GIBSIDE - MICK WILKES



Doing it for the kids

Chestnut Tree House Woodland Walk (left) is one of 44 magical gardens created at children's hospices in the UK by the charity Greenfingers. Help raise money for more gardens like this by taking part in Greenfingers' Garden Re-leaf Day on Friday 27 March. For details, visit www.gardenreleaf.co.uk



By Royal appointment

The Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace is the venue for a new exhibition that charts the changing nature of gardens through works of art in the Royal Collection. More than 150 paintings, drawings, books, manuscripts, decorative pieces and early records of gardens and plants will be on display during the event, which opens on Friday 20 March. Artists represented at 'Painting Paradise: The Art of the Garden' include Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt van Rijn and Carl Fabergé. The exhibition is being accompanied by a new publication by Vanessa Remington.
For more information and tickets, visit www.royalcollection.org.uk

Flowers of Scotland

Some 62 new gardens will be opening as part of Scotland's Gardens this year (*right, Glenlivet in Kirkcudbrightshire*). Visitors will now be able to choose from almost 600 destinations, ranging from grand estates to community growing projects. Scotland's Gardens has raised more than £1million for charity over the past three years. www.scotlandsgardens.org





GET ALL AFLUTTER

Mingle with hundreds of exotic butterflies taking flight within the tropical plantings in The Glasshouse at RHS Garden Wisley. During 'Butterflies in the Glasshouse', which continues until 8 March, visitors can admire the likes of striking blue morphos, giant owl butterflies (*above*) and king swallowtails, while finding out about their feeding preferences and life cycles. You can also marvel at the extensive tender plant collection, many of which are rare and difficult to grow. 'Butterflies in the Glasshouse' also features a display of garden sculptures by artist Alison Catchlove, which were inspired by the event. www.rhs.org.uk/wisley ▶

IMAGES/CHESTNUT TREE HOUSE - JOHN CAMPBELL. ROYAL COLLECTION TRUST - © HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II 2015 BUTTERFLY - BORNIN54/DREAMSTIME.COM

Marvellous magnolias

A woodland containing plants collected by plant hunters Ernest Wilson and George Forrest will be ablaze with colour this month. The gardens at Caerhays Castle in Cornwall contain a National Collection of magnolias (*below*), along with rhododendrons and camellias.

Caerhays has been home to the Williams family for almost 150 years. They are responsible for breeding the x *williamsii* camellias and other hybrids, including the new 'Caerhays Splendour' magnolia. Charles Williams will be hosting an RHS-recommended lecture about magnolias here on Friday 13 March from 10am. Tel: +44 (0)1872 501310. www.caerhays.co.uk
See more magnolias in our Great Comp feature (pg 36).





Ahead of the curve

An iron-framed curved glasshouse is to be restored following a grant of almost £66,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The curvilinear glasshouse (*above*) in the walled garden of Millichope Park in Shropshire dates back to around 1836, but has been derelict for decades. The walled garden, next to the structure, is now home to the Wildegoose Nursery, which specialises in heritage violas. Its owners, Laura Crowe and Jack Willgoss (*above*), plan to give visitors an insight into cultivation during the Victorian era once the restoration is complete. www.boutsviolas.co.uk

WHAT'S ON: MARCH

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Monday 16, East Sussex

Lecture topic will focus on use of annuals as companions for perennial plants in a border, and their ability to lift a display. The practical sessions will include thinning bamboos. £80. 10.30am-4pm. Tel: +44 (0)1797 254048. www.greatdixter.co.uk

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PLANT HUNTERS' FAIR AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Saturday 28, Staffordshire

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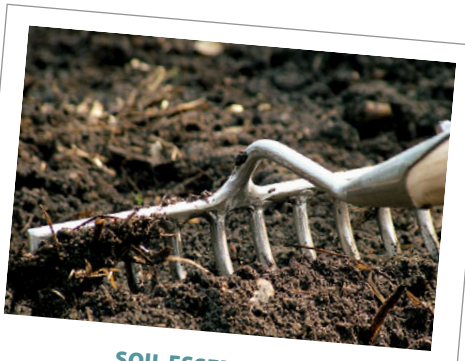
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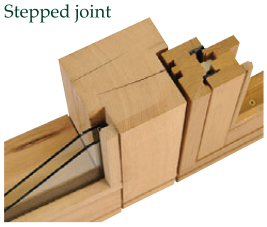
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ALL SYSTEMS GO

With only weeks to go until our home garden Stockton Bury opens, **Tamsin Westhorpe** is sowing, hoeing and mowing

PHOTOGRAPHS JOHN CAMPBELL

Our spirits are most definitely lifted at Stockton Bury. Over the years, the garden has become home to many unusual low-growing woodland plants, so I will spend much of this month looking down, admiring their smiling faces.

With only a month to go before we open to the public, I am still spending time on bended knee, weeding through the borders. Each bed is cut back in winter, and then we go through them inch by inch by hand in spring. We remove perennial weeds down at the roots with a knife and rake leaves away. Working in the borders requires nimble feet; in a mild year, peony and hosta shoots will already be showing.

The annual bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*) is the most invasive weed we have. It has an effective way of shooting its seeds all over the borders - seeds can be shot up to a metre from the parent plant, so we call it Jumping Jack.

My favourite part of the garden at this time is my grandmother's old garden, The Spring Garden, where hellebores and *Fritillaria meleagris* thrive. These native fritillaries are a tempting treat for mice, so when planting the bulbs in autumn, I put them in deep.

The Spring Garden is also home to our straw bee skeps. Most beekeepers now use modern bee hives, and ours are just for decoration. In spring and summer, however, they are often covered in bees - perhaps one day they'll decide to stay. ▶

ABOVE The bee skeps have been put back outside in The Spring Garden, where hellebores and *Fritillaria meleagris* offer a carpet of colour. The leaves of the hellebores were removed in winter so the flowers can be seen.

JOBS THIS MONTH

Lawn care

BELOW Thanks to poor drainage and a very wet winter, the main lawn in the garden urgently needs scarifying. See the 'Spring lawn care' video to find out more. **RIGHT** The *Magnolia stellata* by the tool shed has had its blooms damaged by frost. **BOTTOM RIGHT** Veg such as marrows and potatoes stay cool and fresh in the cellar, along with dahlia tubers lifted last autumn.

The main lawn here was created in the 17th century, and has seen a lot of traffic in its time. After several wet winters, moss has become a real problem, and as a result, we are scarifying the lawn to remove it.

Smaller lawns can be scarified by hand using a spring-tine rake. Be vigorous - you really need to put your back into it to lift the moss. The moss and thatch can then be added to the compost heap. With large lawns, you might be better off calling in a lawn-care company that will scarify, aerate, feed and overseed in a few hours. Whatever method you choose, act now to get the perfect lawn.

REMOVE MOSS Apply a moss killer, which will blacken the moss in about 10 days. This dead moss then needs lifting by scarifying.

AERATION This is vital if your lawn is compact and has poor drainage. On a small lawn, you can simply make holes with a fork. For larger areas, hire an aerator.

TOP DRESS A task that will improve the soil structure and drainage. A mix of sand, peat and loam is brushed into the holes created after aeration has been carried out.

OVERSEED This is only applicable if you have removed so much moss that there is very little lawn left. Some gardeners prefer to overseed in autumn, as a cool spring can see poor results.

FEED Premium lawns are fed twice a year: in spring with a high nitrogen feed; and in autumn with a phosphate and potash fertiliser (don't confuse them!). Some feeds contain weedkiller.

MOWING Get your mower serviced. Some gardeners will do their first spring cut this month. Raise the height of cut for the first few cuts, and gradually lower over summer.



Protecting plants

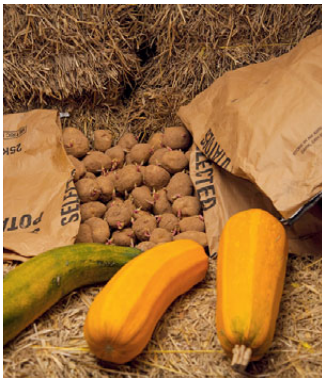


I believe that what the weather presents in March can have a lasting effect on the gardening year. In a mild March, the flowers of magnolias and camellias race ahead, and are in danger of being hit by the frost. With young plants of a reachable height, it is practical to cover them with fleece when cold weather threatens. The specimens here are too large to cover, so it is not unusual for them to be hit. However, we gardeners love to talk about the weather, and a frost-damaged magnolia (*above*) offers up many an hour of conversation.

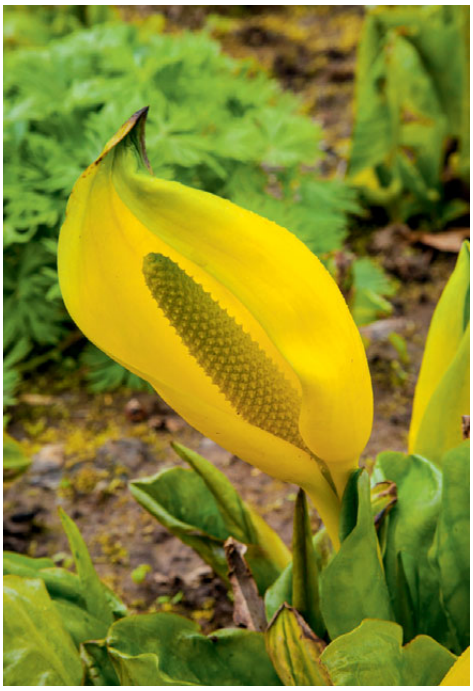
We grow peaches on our south-facing wall in the kitchen garden and, fortunately, with the protection of this wall and the sheltered position of the garden, they are rarely damaged by frost. However, if you are not as lucky as us, you can grow them in containers, which can be moved into an unheated greenhouse from December until the frosts have passed. If the flowers get hit, you'll have a much-reduced crop of juicy peaches, so keep an eye on the forecast.

Still in storage

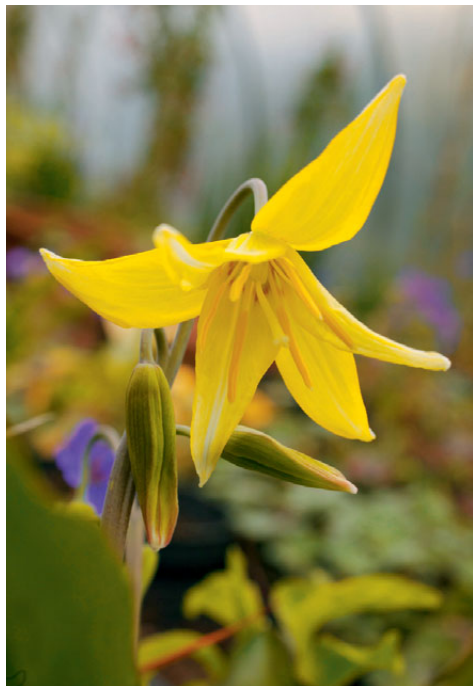
We are still keeping our potatoes, carrots and marrows fresh in the cool but frost-free cellar. Last year's dahlias sit here too, in trays, and new varieties come out of their packs to be covered in dry compost. When the last frost has passed, they will go into the garden. ▶













IN SEASON

MARCH PLANTS

The early spring garden is often associated with the colour yellow, but we enjoy a rainbow of delights. The most-talked-about plant is the *Tropaeolum tricolor*, which can be grown from seed or a tuber and reaches about 2m in height.

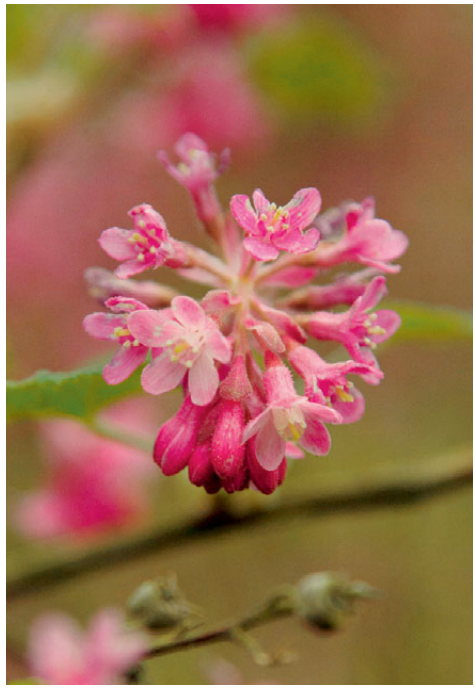
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Lysichiton americanus, also known as skunk cabbage, is the first aquatic plant to flower in the garden; *Fritillaria meleagris*; *Erythronium* 'Pagoda' prefers a free-draining soil that won't dry out; *Tropaeolum tricolor* is grown in the unheated glasshouse and flowers for months in a pot. Once the flowers are over, the foliage dies back completely until the following year; *Ribes sanguineum*; *Stachyurus* 'Magpie'; *Chaenomeles speciosa*; *Brunnera macrophylla* flowers from late March.











IN DEPTH

Preparing the veg beds

ABOVE Tamsin rotavates the veg beds to prepare for planting. **BELOW, FROM LEFT** Tread the soil before sowing; create a string line to follow; use this to make a straight drill; sow your seeds 8cm apart.

Our vegetable beds are on a slope, so every year at this time, we dig a trench at the bottom of the slope and deposit this soil at the top. By doing this, we are preventing a large build up of soil at the bottom.

The beds are then weeded and rotavated. Using a rotavator is hard work, and does not suit everyone, so the alternative is hand digging - choose a dry day to make lighter work of it.

My uncle always sows broad beans in November on his birthday, and again now - they are a family favourite. We grow the old variety 'Aquadulce Claudia', which is highly recommended for autumn sowings.

STEP BY STEP

SOWING BROAD BEANS

- **Ideally, add well-rotted organic matter to the beds in autumn. Dig over the soil now and then tread. You'll look like you are walking like a penguin, but ignore the comments!**
- **Rake over the soil with a garden rake to level and remove stones.**
- **Run a string line from the top to bottom of the bed, and with the corner of the rake, pull a drill.**
- **Place the seeds 5cm deep and about 8cm apart. Gently cover over with soil with your rake, and label the row with variety name and date.**











Prepare the greenhouse

We have two greenhouses. One was hand built by my uncle many moons ago, and leans against the south-facing wall. It is home to fuchsias, begonias, geraniums and our prize climber *Tropaeolum tricolor* (*see pg 19*). The fuchsias spent winter in the cellar, so are now repotted and placed back here.

Our second glasshouse, a Hartley Botanic alpine house, is in the process of being built, and will be home to a planned collection of hepaticas - one visit to John Massey's Ashwood Nurseries in the West Midlands, and we were hooked on these beautiful spring plants.

It's vital to clean the glass and all the nooks and crannies this month before the weather warms up and pests and diseases start to show. So grab your Jeyes fluid and get scrubbing!

LEFT Spring clean your greenhouse this month before it is full of plants, cuttings and seedlings.

It's vital to clean the glass and all the nooks and crannies in your greenhouse before the weather warms up

PROPAGATION STATION
Sowing tomatoes

BELOW Tomato seed will germinate successfully when given a steady temperature of about 18-21ºC. To achieve this, you can use a heated propagator.

We plan to sow our tomatoes about eight to 10 weeks before we usually have our last frost. This is hard to work out with the weather being so unpredictable, so if in doubt I opt for the end of March. This year, I have sown the cherry tomato 'Sungold' F1 and have ordered plants of the grafted tomato 'Indigo Rose', which is black skinned. I am also trying the grafted 'Orangino', which is a cocktail variety. Both are available from Suttons Seeds. Tomato seed needs about 18-21ºC to germinate. Given that temperature, you should see life within a fortnight.



TOP TASK Clear paths



With so many paths in the garden, it would be impractical to hand weed, so at this time of year, we use a weedkiller on paths and drives if required. We're not an organic garden, but we still do our best to restrict the use of chemicals. Apply on a still day when rain is not expected. Unlike me in this photo, it's best to always wear gloves when using chemicals in the garden. ▶







SEASONAL SCENES: TOP *Cardamine laciniata* offers a splash of colour in The Pigeon House Garden. **ABOVE** The polytunnel is now exploding with growth - tender plants will be moved out after the last frosts. **RIGHT** Chaenomeles and cotoneaster create a dashing red drape over a brick wall.

REMEMBER TO...

Apply slug control

This is a warning! Act now to prevent slug damage to your plants. My theory is that if you put down slug pellets this month, you will kill off the first generation of slugs.

We don't tend to use slug pellets in the garden - just in the polytunnel and under the hostas in containers. You only need to apply very few pellets; there is no need to throw them around like sprinkles.

Copper bands have worked well in the past for us on pots, and this year I am determined to also try Nemaslug nematodes in the polytunnel. This biological control is available from www.organiccatalogue.com



ABOVE If you are using slug pellets, you should only apply a few around the pot - that is all you really need.

ON TRIAL: Gardening trousers

In all the years I have gardened, I have never worn a pair of 'gardening trousers', so I unpacked the Genus Women's Original Gardening Trouser with a bit of cynicism. I now know what I have been missing all these years - a dry bottom! These attractive black trousers offer it all, with the damp-proof seat panel and Neoprene-lined knees being my favourite features. The makers have thought of everything, from a stab-proof secateurs pocket to brilliant mobile phone pocket. The lightweight, stretch-nylon fabric is water repellent and drys really quickly, allowing you to wash and dry them overnight. Before trying these out, I would never have considered spending £75 on a pair of trousers for the garden, but the comfort of them has won me over, and I actually quite liked looking presentable for a change. They're really easy to move in, and thanks to the high waist I have not suffered from the usual draughts on my bare back that freeze me while weeding.

Available in both male (sizes 30-40) and female styles (sizes eight to 18). Priced £75. Tel: +44 (0)1285 740004. www.genus.gs



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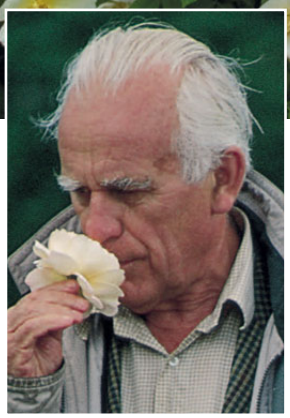
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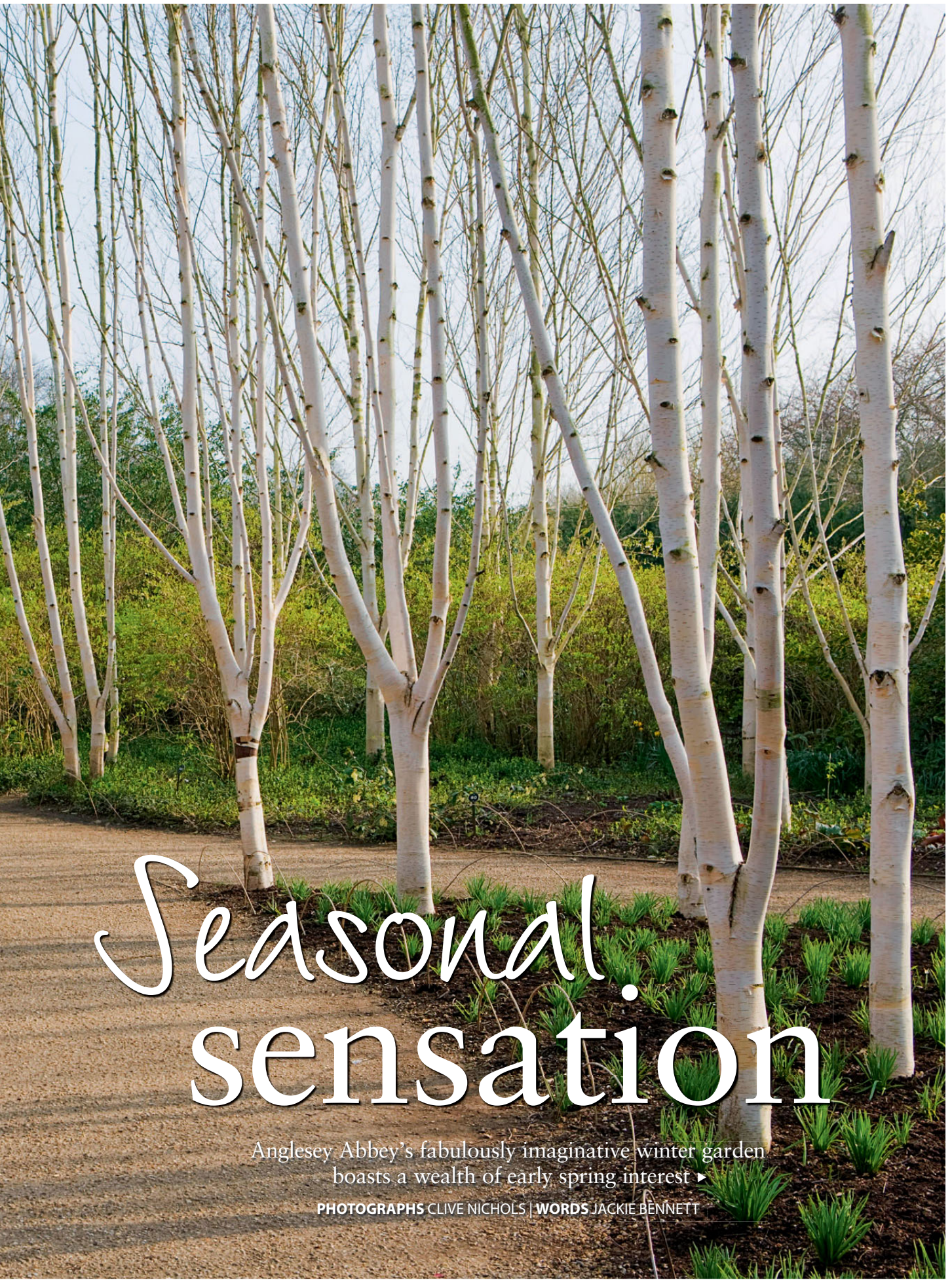
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This grove of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* is the most striking aspect of a visit to the Winter Garden at Anglesey Abbey.



Seasonal sensation

Anglesey Abbey's fabulously imaginative winter garden boasts a wealth of early spring interest ▸

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS | **WORDS** JACKIE BENNETT





GARDEN NOTES

Winter garden for early spring within 114-acre plot

Anglesey Abbey's garden inspires longevity and awards for its gardeners. The current head gardener Richard Todd BEM has worked here for the past 41 years, first under Noel Ayres (who, incredibly, started work here in 1916), and then under Noel's son, the snowdrop expert Richard Ayres MBE.

Richard Todd finally took up the reins in 1999. 'Reins' is perhaps the right metaphor, as Anglesey Abbey is not far from the horse-racing centre of Newmarket - and the fabulously imaginative 114-acre gardens were laid out in the mid-20th-century by the bachelor and race-horse owner Huttleston Broughton, the 1st Lord Fairhaven. He left the estate to the National Trust in 1966, and since then, visitors have been coming to see not only the landscape with its avenues and walks, but also Huttleston Broughton's staggering collection of statuary positioned around the grounds.

'They wanted the garden to be something special - they put their all into it'



In recent years, however, it is the inspired Winter Garden that has increasingly drawn people to this windswept piece of fen. In the mid-1990s, Richard Ayres got together with the National Trust gardens advisor John Sales, to discuss planting something special for the centenary of the birth of the 1st Lord Fairhaven. The idea for a Winter Garden was born.

Richard Todd, who was second in command at the time, remembers it well. 'Both Richard and John were reaching the end of their horticultural careers, and wanted the garden to be something special - they put their all into it.' John planned the curving paths and structural planting, while the 'Richards' put their heads to the underplanting.

'At first, there was no groundcover or bulbs - that came later - and that was the fun part. But in the beginning, we were trying to choose the right shrubs and trees - for scent, bark, and form.'

The site of the Winter Garden is a strip, about 40m wide and 450m long that replaced an early shelterbelt of pines and conifers. After grubbing up the old stumps and preparing the ground, the first plantings were of willows for their yellow stems,

ABOVE LEFT The path is lined with plantings of hellebores, blue *Iris unguicularis* and grasses such as *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light'. **LEFT** Daffodils, violas and hellebores beneath an *Acer pensylvanicum* contrast with the new growth of red leaves of *Photinia* x *fraseri* 'Red Robin'.



wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*) for their flowers, snakebark acers and cherries for their bark, and contorted hazels for their interesting stems. These were set either side of a winding path, which opens out into a large triangular stand of white-stemmed birch, *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*.

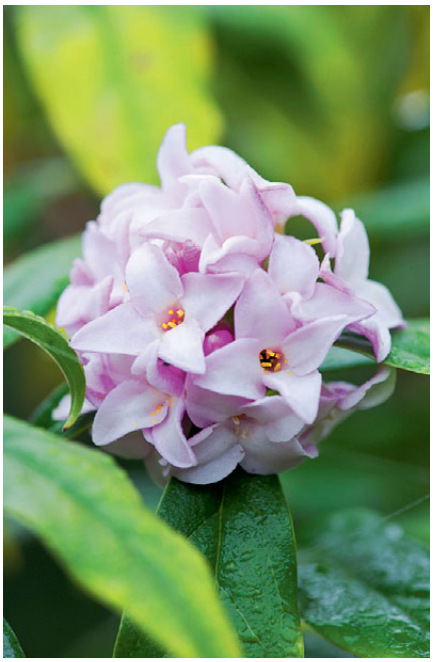
'Winter gardens were few and far between and there were not many examples to go on, so these early plantings were experimental,' says Richard. 'As time has passed, the salix have suffered with the fungal willow watermark disease and will probably have to come out.' As so often in gardens, necessity is the mother of invention, and he has been pushed towards trying new trees, including a new small-leaved lime, *Tilia cordata* 'Winter Orange', and a yellow-twigged ash, *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Jaspidea', which have winter colour in their stems. Mahonia, cornus, callicarpa and sarcococca make up the backbone of shrubs, all known for winter interest.

'We soon got around to ground planting, and have had fun with it ever since. I love experimenting with texture and colour,' Richard explains, 'so we grow multi-coloured *Carex testacea* next to bergenias, with white-stemmed ▶





TOP A swathe of *Narcissus cyclamineus* 'Jetfire' makes a sunny sight alongside grass *Carex testacea*. Further down the path are borders of *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire'. **ABOVE LEFT** These Corten steel gates were made by sculptor John Creed in 2010 to reflect the reeds and plants of the Cambridgeshire fens (www.creedmetalwork.com). **ABOVE RIGHT** The fascinating stems of ghost bramble, *Rubus cockburnianus*.





rubus growing through a carpet of hellebores and early bulbs.' Snowdrops have been a mainstay of the winter garden from the beginning, and they are followed by crocus, blue chionodoxa, miniature narcissi, iris and species tulips. The idea is to keep it going from the first turning of the cornus leaves in October to the final narcissus in spring.

For many people, the enduring image of the Winter Garden here is the white trunks of the birches set against the black earth, finally broken each April by a sea of pink tulip 'Little Beauty' beneath. To preserve this 'artwork', as Richard calls it, the trunks of the birches are washed down in autumn to remove marks or greening of the trunks and keep them gleaming white.

Beneath the wintersweets, a thousand chionodoxa come peeping through, like blue stars

This area is, however, proving problematic. The birches were planted closely together and were planned to have a life of 25 years. Already the trees are losing branches internally and soon will need attention. 'We have decided, after much deliberation, to plant a new grove of birches next to the existing ones,' explains Richard. 'But then, what to do with the old ones? Should we coppice them - that would be one answer. Perhaps remove some and let the others keep growing? The jury is still out on this one.'

ABOVE, FROM LEFT *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' is a stellar plant for the winter garden; catkins of the corkscrew hazel, *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta'; *Chimonanthus praecox* 'Luteus'. **BELOW, FROM LEFT** For red and orange stems you can't beat *Cornus sanguinea* - coppice regularly to retain the bright colours; *Fritillaria raddeana*; hardy beauty *Iris unguicularis*.











Likewise, beside the sinuous path that runs through the Winter Garden, what started as a community of low shrubs, coppiced willow and dogwood has become, in places, a wall of planting. 'It is important we allow space for the plants, and allow visitors to get glimpses to the back of this wide border,' says Richard. 'So we are starting to take things out and cut 'windows' through. It's always ongoing. The important thing to remember is that as trees mature there is less light for what's going on below - a lot of the winter stems rely on good light to give their best colour.'

Challenges aside, walking through the Winter Garden with Richard, it is clear there are few other parts of this estate that fire his interest as much as this small winding strip. With 50,000-plus visitors last February, he is clearly not alone. But it is the continuity that interests him, not a one-off show. 'Our mahonia collection shows you can have winter flowers - from the first, *Mahonia* x *media* 'Winter Sun', which can be out in October, to the last, *Mahonia aquifolium* 'Apollo'.' Likewise, he loves how, when the leaves fall to the ground beneath the wintersweets, 1,000 or more *Chionodoxa gigantea* will come peeping through, like blue stars. Winter gardens are not about one moment - they are about change. For this reason, they need to be seen again... and again...

Anglesey Abbey Gardens, Quy Road, Lode, Cambridge CB25 9EJ. Tel: +44 (0)1223 810080. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Tips on making a winter garden ▶

ABOVE, FROM LEFT *Prunus serrula* is known for its russet winter bark; spring bulb *Chionodoxa luciliae* has star-like blue flowers; *Oemleria cerasiformis*, known as oso berry. **BELOW, FROM LEFT** *Viburnum* x *bodnantense* 'Charles Lamont'; the prickly stems of *Rubus thibetanus* 'Silver Fern'; *Mahonia aquifolium* 'Apollo'.







ANGLESEY ABBEY NOTEBOOK



FRAGRANT DAYS

Richard says scent is probably the most important element in a winter garden. Winter honeysuckle, *Lonicera standishii* (*above*) is a good choice. 'Most mahonias have scent too, as does *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *digyna*, sweet box,' he says.

COLOURFUL COMBINATIONS

Using one of the earlier daffodils, *Narcissus cyclamineus* 'Jetfire', this combination will look good however cold the winter day. With low-growing flowering hellebores, this is a winning pairing that can be replicated in a small space. Try *Helleborus* x *ericsmithii* 'Pink Beauty' for reliable pink blooms.





A QUIET SPACE

Every garden needs a place for quiet contemplation, and this small enclosure off the main path fulfils that need. A statue, *The Boy with Raised Arms,* was moved here to mark the Fairhaven centenary and is surrounded with 8,000 crocus, followed by lavender and sedums in summer. Seats allow people to sit and spend quiet time here.

GARDEN CHALLENGES

SOIL: The soil here needs constant improvement. Some 300 tons of leaf mould were used to boost the soil initially and hold moisture - and every year another 30 tons is added.

ALSO IN THE AREA

- **GARDEN Cambridge University Botanic Garden** One of the first winter gardens to be planted in the UK. Open daily in February and March, 10am-5pm. 1 Brookside, Cambridge CB2 1JE. Tel: +44 (0)1223 336265. www.botanic.cam.ac.uk
- **NURSERY Beeches Nursery** Brilliant plantsmen who have recommended lots of plants for Anglesey Abbey Winter Garden. Ashdon, Saffron Walden CB10 2HB. Tel: +44 (0)1799 584362. www.beechesnursery.co.uk
- **PLACE TO EAT Ristorante Il Piccolo Mondo** Highly rated Italian restaurant - advance booking essential. 85 High Street, Bottisham, Cambridge CB25 9BA. Tel: +44 (0)1223 811434. www.ilpiccolomondo.co.uk

RICHARD TODD'S TIPS FOR PLANTING A WINTER GARDEN

- **Watch where the winter sun** comes into your garden - it's different from other times of year. Plant to make the most of the low angled light, to illuminate stems or the bark of a tree.
- **Aim to have strong contrasts** - in colour, say, between the black grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus* 'Nigrescens') and flowers of snowdrops - or in foliage type: we have combined leafy rue (*Ruta graveolens*) with white-stemmed bramble (*Rubus cockburnianus*) and carex grasses. Plants can't do it on their own; it's the combinations that make the difference.
- **If you don't have much space**, choose one multi-purpose shrub like *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire'. It creates a green backdrop in summer, and when it loses its leaves, the twigs are fiery red. Underplant with snowdrops or crocus to take the eye down to the ground.
- **Try to include one tree** for its bark interest. Birch of course is great, but you could also try *Acer negundo* or *Prunus serrula* with its lovely peeling bark.
- **Include berries**. We use *Cotoneaster lacteus* - it has red fruit which for some reason the birds don't go for, so it works right through to March.



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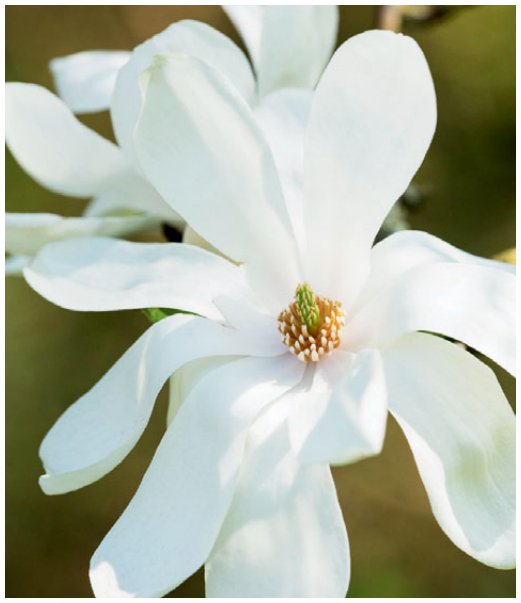
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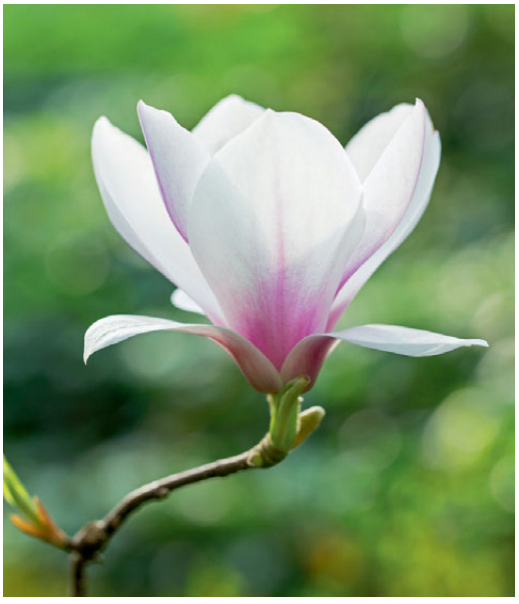
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GARDEN NOTES

7-acre garden with large magnolia collection

Genteel magnolias

The early blooms of elegant magnolias make them the true gentlemen of the garden, opening the door for spring. Visit Great Comp to see a sensational collection built over 50 years

PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS | **WORDS** TAMSIN HOPE THOMSON



William Dyson gestures at the magnolias that are spread through the borders of Great Comp garden in Sevenoaks. 'What I want to achieve is a wall of colour looking down from the house,' he says. As curator of the garden for the past 22 years, he's seen many plants come and go, but there has always been a place for magnolias.

'You need to see the garden in spring, when there are no leaves and all these colours,' explains William, who plants magnolias in groups to get the impact of contrasting shades; fresh whites and soft creams next to soft pinks and dusky purples. With 90 specimens and 60 different varieties of magnolias, as well as a great collection of azaleas, rhododendrons, bulbs and hordes of hellebores, spring arrives at Great Comp in full force.

The seven-acre garden, which is now run by a charitable trust, was created by Roderick (Eric) Cameron and his wife Joy, who came to Kent from London in 1957 looking for a country cottage, and found a 17th-century manor house. 'The garden is a combination of mine and Eric's creation,' says William, who brought a wealth of experience to the garden when he arrived in 1993, and also owns the on-site Dyson's Nurseries, specialising in salvias.

Eric wanted to create a garden that would outlive him. He had no gardening experience when he took on Great Comp, but firm views on what he wanted: he had no interest in limiting the number or type of plants he used, and did not want views that 'petered out'. One of his favourite views was from the terrace at the back of the house. 'From this lawn, on one day in April, I have counted 15 different magnolias in bloom,' Eric wrote in his book, *Great Comp Garden*.

The square garden at the back of the house, framed by hot and cool summer borders looks down on to the main garden, where wide ▶

FAR LEFT, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT *Magnolia* x *soulangeana* 'Rustica Rubra'; *Magnolia* x *loebneri* 'Merrill'; *M.* 'Susan'; *Magnolia* 'Heaven Scent'.
ABOVE A path leads past yew hedges to the moon gate, under a blossoming *Magnolia* x *soulangeana*.









CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A bloom of *Magnolia* 'Star Wars'; the Italian-style courtyard garden with its stone column, surrounded by daffodils. *Magnolia* x *veitchii* towers behind; one of the garden's many stone follies seen through *Magnolia* x *loebneri* 'Merrill'; more magnolias by the oast house.

stretches of lawn curve between generous borders and disappear. 'It was a linchpin in Eric's design to have surprises,' William says, 'to give the illusion that the garden is bigger than it is.' The lawn paths 'create spatial division between the borders'.

All around the garden, urns, statues and ruins are used as focal points, so that as you walk from the back of the house, there is always something of interest to draw you on. The paths wind round and through the garden, to a long stretch of woodland at the bottom, full of hellebores and spring groundcover. Near the house are more formal areas, including a tea terrace and Italian garden.

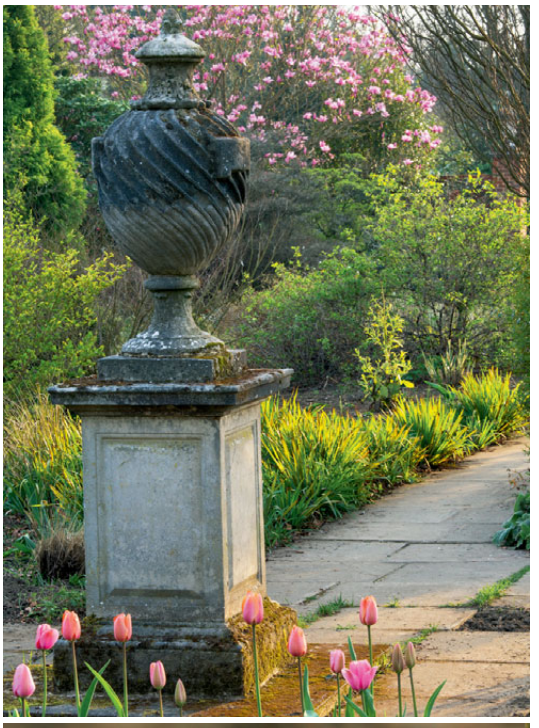
Urns, statues and ruins... there is always something of interest to draw you on

'The Italian garden came about because someone had 50,000 bricks going cheap. Eric, being a Scotsman with an eye for a bargain, was inspired to start building,' William says. 'We did it in a bit of a hurry, and chucked everything in at the time.' The area has now been replanted, full of daffodils and tulips in the spring, with magnolias spilling over the brick walls. It will soon be replanted again, with exotics.

Eric and William built several other ruins and follies using stones they excavated from the garden. 'It gives another dimension to the garden,' William says, 'and acts as another setting for plants.' Eric wanted these ornaments to be associated with interesting planting, rather than stand-alone features.

And it is the planting that attracts around 13,000 visitors a year. Eric was proud of his huge collection, and made a list of 40 plants he thought were essential for a garden - magnolias were among his favourites. Among the varieties, the range is diverse, from 'Star Wars', with its huge pink flowers, to the small but vigorous









'Heaven Scent' and productive *Magnolia* x *veitchii*, which produces around 2,000 flowers.

The garden here has slightly acidic, sandy loam that is perfect for magnolias, and they need little care. 'The less pruning the better,' William says. 'They have a huge mass of fibrous roots, so you have to be careful not to disturb those when you're putting in other plants, but otherwise they'll look after themselves.'

Although Eric planted the majority of trees, William is still planting magnolias, the most recent last year. 'I planted 'Sundance' in 1998, and now look at it - 15 years has gone quickly.' But he's also beginning to take out some trees to rejuvenate the garden. 'When I came, there were a lot more conifers,' William says. 'They were in vogue in Eric's day.' He has begun stripping out some of the 'tottering witches' as he calls them, to let in more light, and taken out three big conifers to replace them with magnolias.

As in Eric's day, there's always another plan for improvement. Now William is gradually extending the planting beyond the main garden into the woodland and boundaries, where previously it was left to its own devices. By lifting the tree canopy, he has let more light into the woodland. Soon there will be shrub roses blooming at the bottom of the garden, and the extra light will encourage more hellebores and spring flowers to flourish in the woodland.

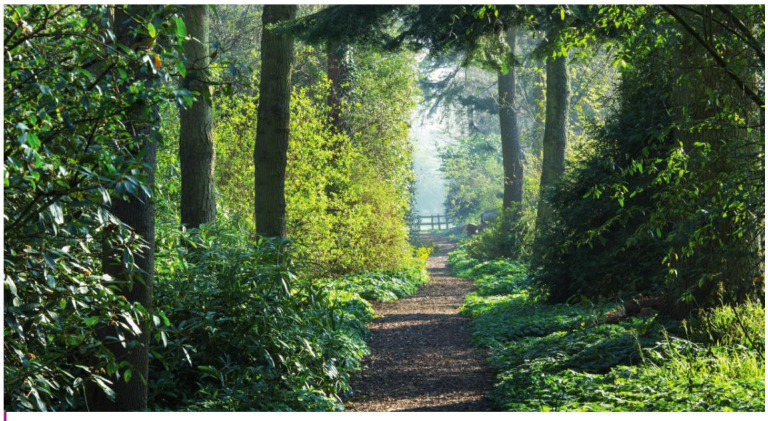
After 44 years working on his garden, at the fine age of 78, Eric spoke of being ready to enjoy it - 'I now look forward to a plant paradise,' he said. If he looked out from the back of the house in spring at William's growing wall of colour - a wash of magnolia blooms lighting up the borders - I don't think he would be disappointed.

Great Comp, Comp Lane, Platt, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 8QS. See the magnolias in bloom during the Spring Fling Plant Fair on Sunday 12 April. Tel: +44 (0)1732 885094. www.greatcompgarden.co.uk

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT *Magnolia* 'Star Wars' behind an urn and statue-topped, arched brick wall; *Magnolia* 'Heaven Scent' has pink blossom, highlighted against a large stone urn and tulips; *Magnolia* 'Pegasus'; heather, conifers and clipped evergreens create a scenic view further into the garden.

Top magnolia tips ▶

GREAT COMP NOTEBOOK



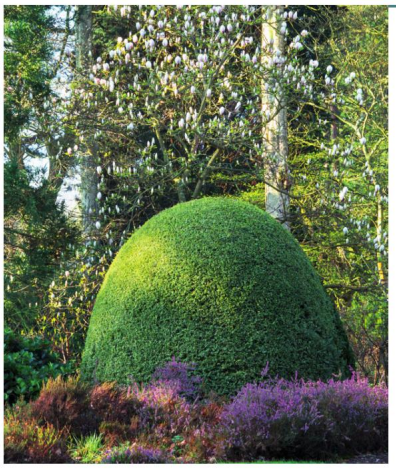
OUTSIDE VIEW

Eric liked a mix of straight and curving paths to create different effects. This long path in the woodland, running from east to west along the entire length of the garden, includes a view at the end of the landscape outside the boundaries, bringing the countryside in and making the garden seem bigger. In time, there will be shrub roses along the edges of the path.

TOTALLY BUSTED

Ornaments, including busts and urns, are used around the garden as focal points to lead the eye on and add another layer of interest. Here the bust is of Brutus, a copy of a piece from Florence, which is set off well by the yew hedge backdrop. The urns were installed at the same time.





ANYONE FOR PUDDING?

Clipped plants provide structure and interest during winter and a foil for spring plants. There are many shapes around the garden such as a box doughnut and this pudding shape. *Buxus sempervirens* 'Elegantissima' and dwarf *Chaemaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Pygmae Argentea' have been allowed to merge and then clipped together. They provide an excellent contrast for *Magnolia* 'Sundance' behind, which William planted only 15 years ago.

GARDEN CHALLENGES

MAKING CHANGES: When creating new planting designs, William found the challenge was making it work while having to retain some of the existing plantings, sometimes for sentimental reasons. 'In the end, I came to the conclusion that in parts of the garden, it was best to rip it all out and start again,' he says.

ALSO IN THE AREA

While visiting Great Comp, William recommends you also try:

- **NURSERY Downderry Nursery** Pillar Box Lane, Hadlow, Tonbridge, Kent TN11 9SW. Tel: +44 (0)1732 810081. www.downderry-nursery.co.uk
- **NURSERY Iris of Sissinghurst** Roughlands Farm, Goudhurst Rd, Marden, Kent TN12 9NH. Tel: +44 (0)1622 831511. www.irisofsissinghurst.com
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- **FARM SHOP The Hop Shop** Castle Farm, Redmans Lane, Shoreham, Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 7UB. Tel: +44 (0)1959 523219. www.hopshop.co.uk

TOP MAGNOLIA TIPS FROM WILLIAM DYSON

- **Grow plants that suit the conditions** of your garden. Don't try to grow magnolias in limey soil; you'll just end up creating a lot of work for yourself for little reward. We have slightly acid soil, which suits magnolias well.
- **Be careful not to disturb** magnolias' roots when planting around them - they have a huge system with masses of fibrous roots.
- **Prune magnolias** as little as possible.
- **For an average sized garden**, I'd go for one of the Gresham hybrids. They've got a long flowering season and you get lots of rich purples and pinks.
- **A good choice for small** to medium-sized gardens is *Magnolia* x *loebneri* 'Merrill'.



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FIRST FLUSH

Dial Park is a small home garden with a tapestry of colour in early spring, when most gardens have yet to awaken from their winter slumber

PHOTOGRAPHS JASON INGRAM | **WORDS** VERONICA PEERLESS



This unusual yellow snowdrop, *Galanthus plicatus* 'Primrose Warburg', was found in the garden of a famous plantswoman after her death and given her name. **OPPOSITE** The shady border by Olive's driveway hosts masses of spring planting.

Many well-known large gardens have a winter garden or walk, filled with plants that offer welcome flowers, colourful stems, interesting foliage and powerful scent in the cooler months. They are a delight to visit, but the look can be hard to replicate in our own gardens - few of us have the luxury of being able to dedicate an area of the garden to looking good in just one season.

Which is what makes the garden at Dial Park in Worcestershire so interesting. This private garden looks stunning in winter and early spring; so much so that it was a direct inspiration for the winter garden at nearby Ragley Hall. But crucially, the garden looks good all year round. 'When I started the garden 25 years ago, I didn't set out to create a winter garden,' says owner Olive Mason. 'I was aiming for interest throughout the year.'

Thus you won't find a bed of flaming red cornus stems or a thicket of white *Rubus cockburnianus* at Dial Park. Rather, the winter and early spring interest is spread throughout the garden and is just one element of the bigger picture. Walking around the garden with Olive, it is clear that she thinks carefully about which plants associate well with each other, and which plants will keep the interest going. ▶



GARDEN NOTES

¾-acre plot known for early spring interest



The show starts with snowdrops: some, such as *Galanthus elwesii* 'Peter Gatehouse', appear as early as December. In the large, shady border beside the driveway, snowdrops form a spectacular patchwork with cheery yellow aconites, hellebores and cyclamen, including *Cyclamen hederifolium* 'Fairy Rings', grown more for its heart-shaped, silver-splashed leaves than its flowers. These are complemented by wintergreen polypodium ferns ('They associate well with snowdrops') and Italian arums, also grown for their interesting leaves. The flapping bark of *Prunus serrula* burns orange in the low winter sun, while the seedheads of honesty sparkle against the white trunks of silver birch (*Betula utilis*). A witch hazel, *Hamamelis* x *intermedia* 'Arnold's Promise', is awash with spidery yellow flowers, pumping out a strong sweet scent.

'I wasn't planning to create a winter garden - I was aiming for interest throughout the year'

Olive has created numerous different growing areas in the garden so she can grow the widest possible range of plants. The semi-circular bank around the garden, for example, gives her sunny and shady planting areas. One south-facing bank is filled with crocuses in spring, followed by summer bulbs. A shady bank under the pergola is home to snowdrops, epimediums and ferns such as *Adiantum pedatum*, all of which can be appreciated at eye level. '*Corydalis temulifolia* 'Chocolate Stars' is here, too - it has chocolatey, ferny leaves that come at snowdrop time, and mauve-pink flowers later on,' says Olive. In summer, the pergola is swathed in clematis.

Near the house, a gravel-topped raised bed is filled with bulbs for spring interest: pulsatillas, scillas and, later, alliums. On the boundary of the garden, a strip of plum and apple trees is ▶

THIS PAGE, TOP The formal parterre is edged with box. It is a striking feature, even in winter. **ABOVE** The standard topiary on the vegetable patch is inspired by bolted leek flowers. **OPPOSITE PAGE** *Chaenomeles* x *superba* 'Pink Lady' flowers by the gazebo on the front lawn. It is underplanted with daffodils, snowdrops and narcissi.





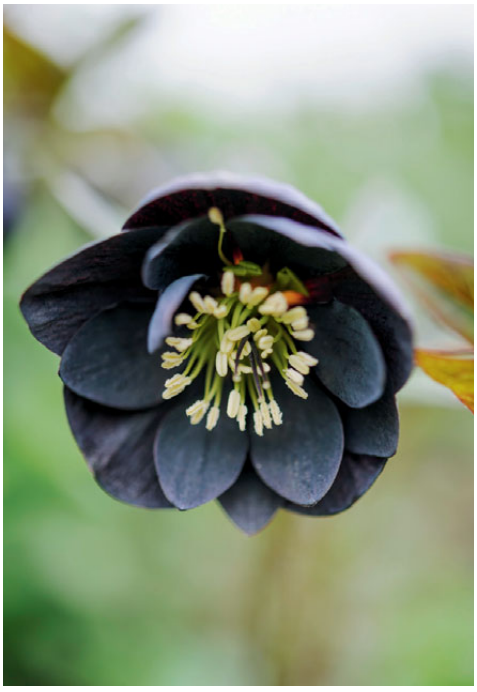






CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Anemone blanda; Narcissus 'Van Sion'; *Prunus* 'Kursar'; *Helleborus* x *hybridus* Ashwood Garden Hybrids; the striking fuzzy stems and purple flowers of *Pulsatilla vulgaris;* winter aconite, *Eranthis hyemalis; Euphorbia characias; Primula* 'Blue Lace Mary' is a new introduction by breeder Margaret Webster. Available to buy in 7cm pots from Hayloft Plants.

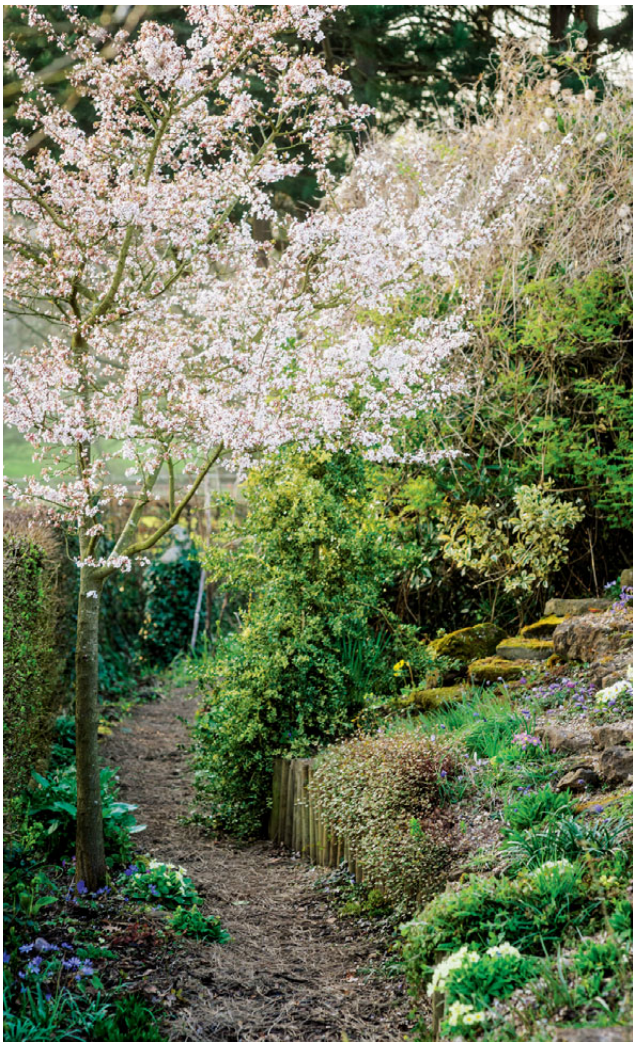












ABOVE A yew hedge with arches divides the space into different areas and provides structure. **RIGHT** A bank was created around the edge of the garden to create privacy and raised growing areas - better for appreciating spring bulbs like snowdrops. On this bank, crocuses and scillas thrive. The tree is a *Prunus cerasifera* 'Hessei' - after the blossom, it has dark leaves with unusual white markings.

These days, it's fashionable to leave plants standing over winter, but Olive cuts most of hers back in autumn

underplanted with spring bulbs that flower in succession: snowdrops, wild daffodils, camassias and wild tulips, *Tulipa sprengeri*, which are prolific self-seeders.

Olive estimates that around 25% of the garden is evergreen. A shaped yew hedge divides the garden and gives structure, while witty topiary abounds: a peacock, a nascent flock of box hens and a box snake. Some standard box balls on the veg patch are clipped into the shape of alliums, inspired by bolted leeks. The west-facing parterre is edged with box and planted for summer, with white tulips followed by herbaceous perennials and annuals. 'But when the parterre is cleared, it's still quite a feature in winter.'

These days, it's fashionable to leave herbaceous plants standing over winter, but Olive cuts most of hers back in autumn. 'You need to give the plants that are coming through room to grow,' she says. 'I need to see the snowdrops coming up. I grow a lot of primroses and they need the ground to be clear. If it's frosty, dead plants look gorgeous, but we have a lot of wind and wet here, and some plants just collapse.' Honesty is spared the chop, as it has interesting seedheads, as is the robust ornamental grass, *Oryzopsis miliacea*. 'It looks really good in the low evening light, and seems to sparkle.' Olive aims to have most plants cut back by late October or early November, when the first snowdrops begin to come through, and the show begins again.

Olive has opened her garden for the National Gardens Scheme for the past 20 years, raising around £50,000 for charity. She's taking a well-deserved break in 2015, but can be proud that she has proven to thousands of visitors that it is entirely possible to plant a small garden so that it looks lovely all year round.

Dial Park will not be opening in 2015. In 2016, check *The Yellow Book* or www.ngs.org.uk for dates

Olive's top gardening tips ▸

DIAL PARK GARDEN NOTEBOOK

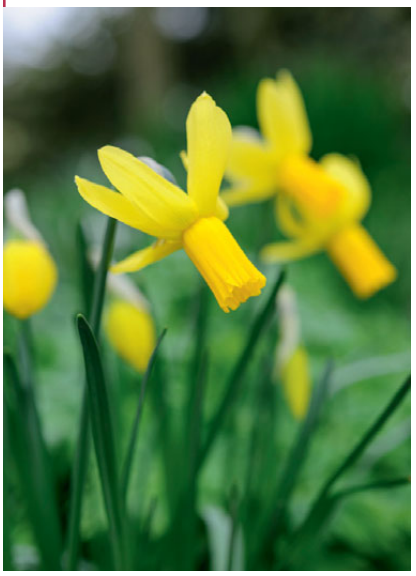


SILVER STUNNERS

The silver birches in the shady border are 25 years old, and act as eye-catchers along the drive. 'If I was 20 years younger, I would replace them with young trees, as they're getting too big,' says Olive, 'but they're a real feature of the garden.'

MINI MARVELS

Olive loves miniature daffodils like this *Narcissus* 'Rapture'. 'They follow on after the snowdrops,' she says, 'coming out earlier than the normal varieties.' Another favourite is 'Candlepower', with cream petals, which is not so widely available.





SUPER SHAPES

The garden has lots of topiary in interesting shapes, including this box snake along the parterre.

TOP GARDENING TIPS FROM OLIVE MASON

- **Cut back old, tatty foliage** in late autumn to make room for snowdrops and other winter and spring-flowering plants. Shred and compost it.
- **Feed the soil in autumn**. I tickle in some potash and bonemeal, then mulch with some home-made leaf mould.
- **Plant expensive or precious bulbs** in mesh baskets so they're easy to find.
- **Cut the leaves off hellebores**. This prevents disease from spreading, and helps to show off the flowers. I aim to get this done by Christmas.
- **Plant snowdrops as late as possible** after flowering, when they've finished growing. Take care not to damage the roots as they will take a long time to recover.
- **Put two labels in pots** when potting up snowdrops. It's so easy to lose plant labels, so I put one at the bottom of the pot first.
- **Choose plants with a long flowering season**. *Anisodontea* 'El Rayo' has mallow-like flowers, which keep going all winter against a west-facing wall. *Ypsilandra thibetica* has white, feathery flower spikes and flowers from January to June.
- **Hand weed, don't hoe**. I like things to self seed, even though I pull out most of the plants, so the garden looks natural.



GARDEN CHALLENGES

PESTS: The grubs of swift moth like to chew on snowdrop bulbs, inhibiting growth. This grassland pest scatters its eggs as it flies around. There's no control, so Olive just keeps planting more snowdrops.

ALSO IN THE AREA

If you are in Worcestershire, Olive recommends visiting:

- **GARDEN Spletchley Park** 'It has an established look and an air of faded gentility.' Spetchley, Worcs WR5 1RS. Tel: + 44 (0)1905 345106. www.spetchleygardens.co.uk
- **NURSERY Ashwood Nurseries** Plant nursery and garden centre specialising in hellebores, snowdrops, hepaticas and more. Ashwood Lower Lane, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 0AE. Tel: + 44 (0)1384 401996. www.ashwoodnurseries.com
- **NURSERY Stone House Cottage Nursery** Specialises in wall shrubs, climbers and unusual herbaceous plants. There is also a romantic one-acre garden. Near Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 4BG. Tel: +44 (0)7817 921146. www.shcn.co.uk

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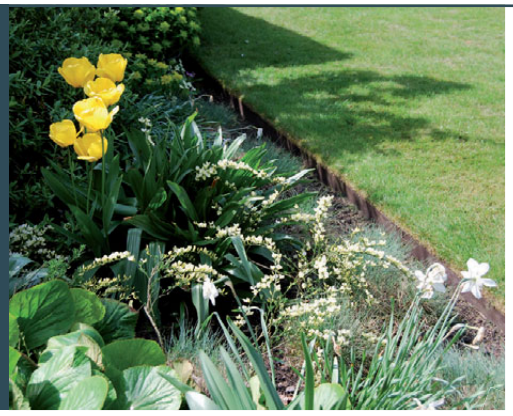


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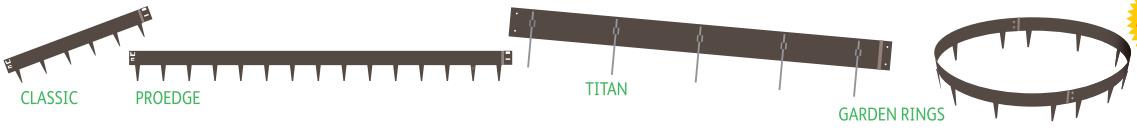
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The English Garden is thrilled to welcome both Chris Beardshaw and Christine Walkden to our home garden Stockton Bury to share their knowledge and skill with our readers. These intimate day courses are designed for small groups, and give you a chance to improve your knowledge and ask questions.

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● **Tuesday 5 May**

Christine Walkden: The Water Garden

TV Gardener of the Year Christine comes to Stockton Bury fresh from her fantastic series *Glorious Gardens from Above*. Spend the day with her learning about the water garden, from plant choice to pond management, wildlife and solving common problems.

Price £105, subscribers £99 (including lunch).

● **Monday 14 September**

Chris Beardshaw: The Practical Gardener

Chris will demonstrate propagation techniques, tasks that need to be carried out before winter and making the most of your plants with seed harvesting, propagation and division.

Price £105, subscribers £99 (including lunch).

BOOKING DETAILS

Itinerary

On arrival, you will be met by Editor-at-Large of *The English Garden* Tamsin Westhorpe. Each day will begin with tea or coffee at 10.30am, and will include a two-course lunch at the Tithe Barn Restaurant in the garden. Course price includes access to the four-acre Stockton Bury Gardens on that day. Day ends at approx. 4pm with tea or coffee. You will be both inside and out, so be prepared for all weathers. For directions and facilities, visit www.stocktonbury.co.uk

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WHO WILL YOU VOTE FOR?

In 2014, we launched *The English Garden* Future Fund bursary scheme, offering up to £5,000 funding to a worthwhile gardening idea or project. Applications flooded in, and have been whittled down to a shortlist. Now it's your chance to pick the gardening project you think should get the funding for 2015...



COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

Flower Pod in Nottinghamshire is a social enterprise offering support to adults with learning difficulties, growing and selling cut flowers



HERITAGE APPEAL

The Walled Nursery in Kent is home to 13 Victorian glasshouses, many urgently in need of repair, including the Carnation House



PET PROJECT

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home in London had a garden used for exercising ill and nervous dogs, but it has been damaged by recent construction work

HOW TO VOTE

One of these three groups will be awarded up to £5,000 funding to make their project happen. It is down to you now to choose the winning project, as the decision will be made by an online public vote. Simply read the stories of the three projects in the next few pages, and then go to **bit.ly/tegfuturefund** online and follow the instructions to vote for the one you think deserves to get the funding. Voting closes on 28 February 2015.

We will announce the winner in an upcoming issue and then follow the project to see what is done with the funding, revealing the completed project in a feature later in the year.

THE ENGLISH GARDEN FUTURE FUND

Find out more about our shortlisted projects overleaf ▸

PROJECT 1: FLOWER POD

Flower Pod in Southwell, Nottinghamshire, is a social enterprise that showcases the skills of its growers, all of whom are volunteers or adults with learning disabilities. Anna Joyce and her team help these growers tend cut flowers in a newly created garden, and create bouquets, buttonholes and arrangements for weddings, businesses and to sell at markets.

They arrange the flowers in a new eco building on their site, which is leased from nearby Nottingham Trent University, whose horticultural students are offered volunteering opportunities. The umbrella charity Reach Learning Disability was awarded a Social Enterprise Investment grant to get the project started in 2013, which allowed Flower Pod to build this workshop. Hundreds of local people gave their time and support, helping to move soil.

Flower Pod is largely run by volunteers. Anna and her team hope to one day be self-funding.



FUTURE FUND PROJECT:
To add natural confetti as a new product for Flower Pod - creating confetti is a sociable and interactive task for people with learning difficulties, and this new offering would help the enterprise compete with other suppliers and move towards becoming self-sustained. Also to increase public awareness of Flower Pod with marketing including a website and branding tools.
Total requested: £4,600



'There are fewer reasons to get out of bed in the morning if you have a learning disability. Flower Pod offers some light'



Flower Pod would like the funding to:

- Erect a rabbit-proof fence around new confetti-flower growing area; invest in tools and plants; buy frames and a specialist blender to create 'petal paper' for cones.
- A large proportion of the funding requested would be for creating a new website, as well as branding, advertising, leafleting and packaging materials for the project.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP The Flower Pod team includes Ian Thompson, Anna Joyce, Bridget O'Shea and Fiona Nicholass; the cut-flower garden; confetti making would be a great new enterprise; the workshop; one of Flower Pod's happy growers.





PROJECT 2: THE WALLED NURSERY

The Walled Nursery in Hawkhurst, Kent, is a family run nursery set within a walled garden, which is home to 13 Victorian glasshouses - one of the most intact collections of Victorian glass in the UK. Although many are in desperate need of repair, most of the glasshouses are still used to grow plants by owners Emma and Monty Davies.

The site is run by the couple and a few part-time staff, but is a family affair with parents, siblings and kids helping and lots of volunteers.

The nursery is open to visitors to enjoy the glasshouses, walled garden and plant selection, and there is a free museum on site, with detailed information on Victorian glasshouses.

Emma also carries out lots of community work to raise awareness of the importance of these heritage buildings, including visits from local primary schools. Volunteers from Southdown Housing, many of whom experience mental health issues, also come to the nursery for much-needed respite and to learn about growing.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Emma Davies in one of the Victorian glasshouses already restored on the site; the nursery is situated in a walled garden, with museum and café; the Carnation House is in desperate need of repair after winter storm damage.

FUTURE FUND PROJECT:
To repair the Carnation House that was damaged in the severe winter storms of 2013/14, restoring an important piece of gardening history and keeping this heritage alive for future generations.
Total requested: £4,800

The Walled Nursery would like the funding to:

- Restore the Carnation House including removal of the vents, rotten ridge plates and end panel. Replace with new ones made by a joiner on-site and treat the ironwork before repainting and reglazing. ▶

'Repairing our Carnation House would allow us to raise much-needed funds to keep the site alive'





PROJECT 3: BATTERSEA DOGS & CATS HOME

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home in London is a charity that aims to educate people about responsible pet ownership and looks after up to 9,000 lost, unwanted and abandoned dogs and cats every year. The home's staff and army of volunteers care for the animals 365 days a year.

Volunteer Katie Morgan is studying horticulture, and has applied to restore and improve a small garden space at the home. Dogs that have medical issues or don't socialise well with other dogs need a dedicated space on-site to exercise, play and explore. They rely on this space, Mary's Garden, as it allows them to walk and run on soft surfaces, explore scented plants, play and enjoy being outside, to relax and recover off the lead. The home is in an urban environment, and this area offers a calming green place for staff and dogs.

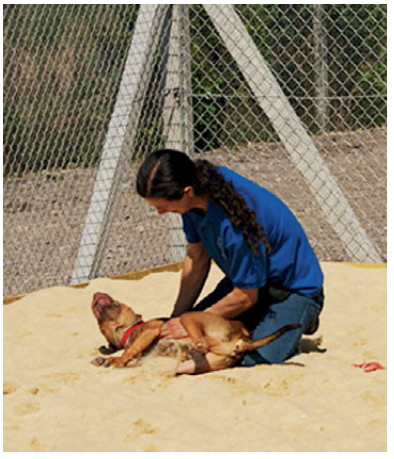


'Together we can create a sensory garden to bring happiness to our abandoned dogs'

FUTURE FUND PROJECT:
Last year, construction workers brought heavy machinery across the garden to build new kennels. The garden was badly damaged by this work, and the earth was compacted and marred by rubble and building debris. Katie has applied to restore the garden for the dogs and staff. It is hoped that local garden enthusiasts like her with no access to a garden will volunteer to care for it.
Total requested: £4,851

Battersea Dogs & Cats Home would like the funding to:

- Recreate 'Mary's Garden' with improved features and planting.
- Buy railway sleepers, compost, topsoil, turf, large pots for climbers, plants, trellis, a manual cylinder mower, hosepipe and wheelbarrow.
- Buy a bench and table for staff and volunteers.

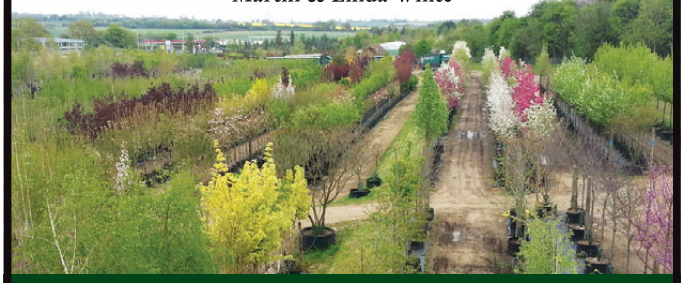


CLOCKWISE FROM TOP Volunteer Katie Morgan is determined to restore the garden to its former glory; dogs could enjoy the sandpit again, safe and off the lead; how the garden looks now after machinery for construction came through; how the space looked before.





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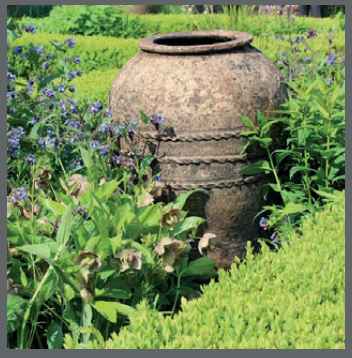


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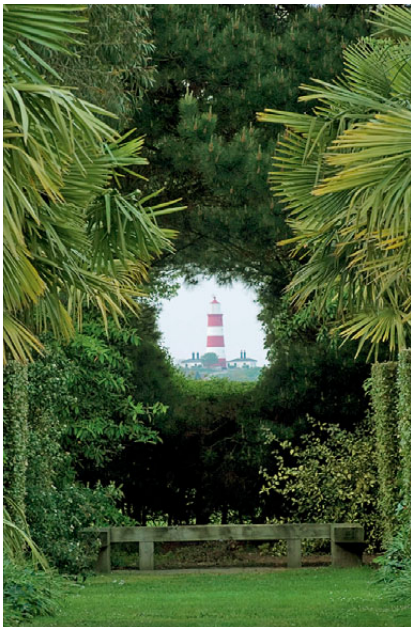
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WARM WELCOME

Award-winning RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden designer **Matthew Childs** suggests inspiration for garden openings for any size and budget







IMAGES/ARCHWAY AT RHS CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW 2014 - JOHN CAMPBELL
DOORWAY - GAP/ANDREW BUTLER WINDOW - EAST RUSTON BY MARCUS HARPUR

ARCHWAYS

Gardens are living, breathing spaces, constantly evolving over time. I love to build on this energy in the garden, creating a sense of movement and journey. Archways are a fantastic mechanism for doing this, as they create apertures through which a path can meander, dividing the space into a series of garden rooms, each with a different atmosphere. They can also frame garden elements such as seats, sculptures or a specimen plant, but also encourage you to explore. At the RHS Chelsea Flower Show last year, I used two large copper patinated archways to do just this (*above*).

DOORWAYS

Doorways have the ability to be much more than a functional element within the garden. In fact, I often try to make a feature of them by painting them a striking colour - just like the East Gate at Highgrove Gardens (*above*), designed by William Bertram. It is painted pink, which was HRH The Queen Mother's favourite colour. In a small garden, you could even place a mock doorway to give the illusion that there is more of the garden beyond. Often the size of a doorway will be guided by its intended use; Highgrove's East Gate leads from the Azalea Walk into the Kitchen Garden.

WINDOWS

It is important to have a balance between the masses and voids within a garden, and windows are a great way of providing a sense of light and transparency. Like doorways, they add to the feeling of a garden room, and can provide an element of drama. I love to create new windows within a garden simply by pruning mature shrubs or by lifting the canopy of a tree to open up new views and vistas. All too often, we enclose our gardens with high walls or fences, but where possible, consider leaving voids through to other areas of the garden, or to the landscape beyond.

To find out more about Matthew's work, visit www.matthewchildsdesign.co.uk

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PRIVATE VIEW

PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS | **WORDS** STEPHANIE MAHON

Bunny Guinness's half-acre garden has morphed from family space to self-sufficiency plot over the years, but stayed full of ingenious ideas and surprisingly low maintenance



Bunny Guinness and her husband moved to Sibberton Lodge in Cambridgeshire 30 years ago. The landscape architect, well known for her writing in *The Telegraph* and her appearances on Radio 4's *Gardeners' Question Time*, says there was nothing in the way of a garden on the site when they arrived. 'The house was built in the 13th century and formed part of a tenant farm,' she explains. 'We ended up with half an acre of garden, not including the woodland and meadows.' ▶



▼ **WALLED WONDER**
This shallow pool runs the length of the walled garden. Pleached hornbeam were planted around it for privacy, to block the house next door from overlooking. 'I put in the false gate at the bottom for views out to the meadow - there is no access there,' says Bunny.

Bunny began by planting trees and starting hedges from cuttings, and over the years has created different areas around the house and beyond, from a front courtyard and walled garden to a veg garden, utility area and orchard.

Things have changed over the years as the family has grown and changed. 'You change your focus a bit,' Bunny explains. 'When we started out we had no children; then they came along, and we created dedicated spaces in the garden for them. Now, the children are mainly gone, and it is mostly about self-sufficiency these days.'

One of the most recent changes was the creation of the kitchen prep area (*see previous page*), which was previously a field. 'The sheep would come right up to the building, and watch the TV through the window!' says Bunny. As well as the prep area, there is room for a Kadai firebowl and two comfy rattan sofas, which dog Gracie Jones enjoys snoozing on.

'I like the garden to be really usable,' she says, 'so there are tables and chairs in all the spaces.' Tom Hitchcock from Gedding Mill made the furniture, some of it to Bunny's design, in steel with an acid-etched galvanised finish, which is maintenance free.

When she began, Bunny did plan out the whole garden into areas, but she has also tweaked over time. 'The main thing was to get it to flow right, so all the garden spaces link and you are aware of them from the house,' she says. 'The house and garden should interact with each other.' In fact, Bunny believes in this principle so much that while building a kitchen extension, she made sure the windows were put in low enough that when sitting at the kitchen table, the garden is in full view. 'I like to see the changes of the seasons,' she explains, 'one landscape in summer and another in winter.'

An important element of the garden for Bunny was that it be low maintenance. 'I've got to be able to manage it with minimal time, because I only have one day a week and a gardener who helps me once a week.'



'All the garden spaces link and you are aware of them from the house'



▲ **WELL STONE ME**
Stone-look balls are a motif repeated throughout the garden, as bench feet like this and as decorative elements. 'I designed this bench for a TV programme years ago, out of stone. These balls are actually reconstituted stone coloured to match the local stone,' Bunny says. It is surrounded by cephalaria, phlox and *Acanthus mollis*.



◀ PLANTING PICKS

At the top of the walled garden is a long table and chairs for dining, in front of a colourful border. The planting here is mostly in shades of plum, purple and blue, including standard forms of the rose Munstead Wood, one of Bunny's favourites, which is repeated through the border. 'It flowers for a long period and gives the border unity.' Other stars include *Phlomis russeliana, Astrantia major* Gill Richardson Group, *Hydrangea sargentiana*, delphiniums and climbers including false jasmine. There is very poor soil everywhere, so Bunny continually adds things to improve it.

The dovecote covers an old filled-in window hatch. There are no doves, 'but we painted them on *trompe l'oeil* style.'

▼ HOLDING COURT

The front courtyard is enclosed with a yew hedge and designed into a cruciform shape with box hedging. Quince trees sit at each corner and the beds have obelisks covered in roses such as 'Jacques Cartier'. 'I favour roses - David Austin is my uncle - but my poor soil means careful selection of varieties.'





▲ PLAYING AROUND

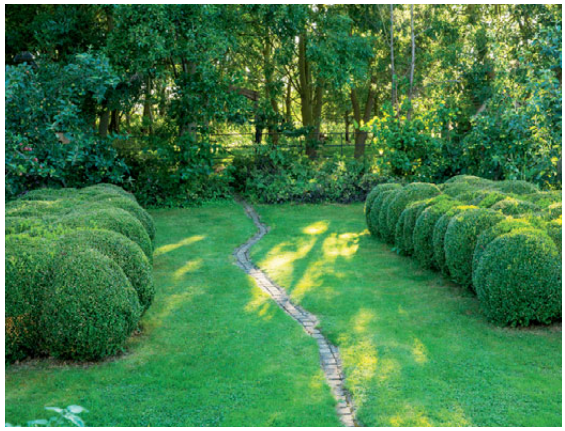
The courtyard used to be laid to grass, and was like an outdoor playpen, great for keeping an eye on the kids - 'I could see them from my office,' Bunny says. 'When money permitted, we paved it.' The unpaved squares are planted with *Thymus serpyllum* 'Minimus' and the gravel has blobs of *Euporbia myrsinites*. ▶

EVERGREEN INTEREST



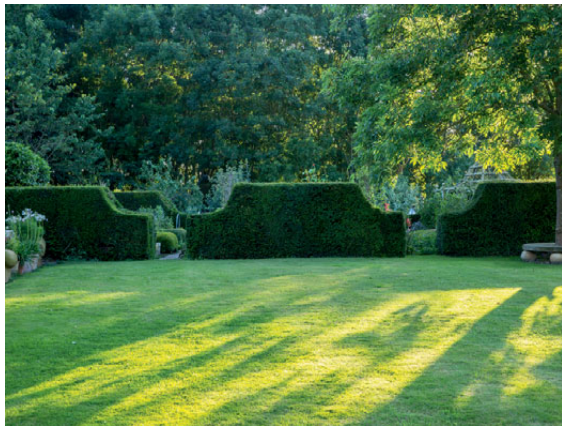
BOTTOMLESS POTS

These enormous Portuguese laurel are growing in baseless pots. 'They have got so large, I have to chainsaw them back and make them into balls,' Bunny explains. 'I like mucking around with topiary.'



CLOUDS OF GREEN

Cloud-pruned box balls flank a thin stone sett path that leads into the woods. They were a dwarf hedge on one of Bunny's RHS Chelsea show gardens a few years ago. She brought it home, planted it and reclipped like this.



TAKE SHELTER

'There were no trees here when we arrived, and it was a very windy site,' says Bunny. 'I planted a shelterbelt in the first week as a screen, then these yew hedges from cuttings. I shaped off the corners recently, to open up the view into the veg garden.'



▲ **VEG HEAVEN**

The veg garden cloches are also from an RHS Chelsea show garden, and made at Gedding Mill. The wooden fruit cage at the back was home-made, for raspberries. Espaliered apple trees grow in baseless pots inside wicker edging, inside doughnuts of box hedging. 'I change what I grow all the time, always different things, but rely on watercress, spinach, cut-and-come-again lettuce, sprouts, leeks, tomatoes and garlic. We are fairly heavily self-sufficient.'



▲ **CHOP, CHOP**

Bunny transformed part of a field into this outdoor lounge and kitchen with chopping area, barbecue and sink along the wall. 'It's great as we eat outside quite a lot,' she says. *Rosa* 'Phyllis Bide' grows on the wall, while pots of pelargoniums adorn the worktop.



RAISE ME UP

Bunny often experiments with raised beds. The bottom ones here are 12 years old, made from split woven hazel with cedar coping. The top layer, which is new, is woven split sweet chestnut, with oak ones elsewhere. Cecil the cow looks on - Bunny also keeps pigs and chickens.



'I change what I grow all the time, always different things'

WOMAN AT WORK

This greenhouse is one of two in Bunny's utility area at bottom of the old orchard. It is home-made from reclaimed windows, and cost about £1,000. 'I couldn't manage without it,' she says. 'It's invaluable in this small working garden, where I do lots of cuttings and sowing.'



DESIGNER PROFILE

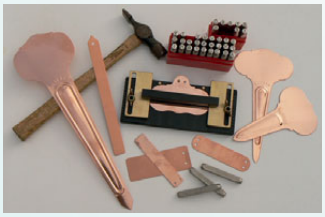
BUNNY GUINNESS qualified as a landscape architect after completing a degree in horticulture, and set up her own practice in 1986. She also works as a gardening writer, author and broadcaster. Bunny has designed nine show gardens including several at RHS Chelsea, winning six gold medals. She works up and down the country on diverse projects for private and commercial clients. Her latest book, *Highgrove: A Garden Celebrated* with HRH The Prince of Wales, on his home garden in Gloucestershire, is on sale now (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, £35). www.bunnyguinness.com



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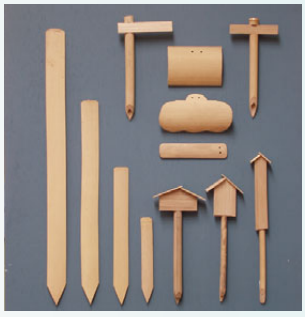
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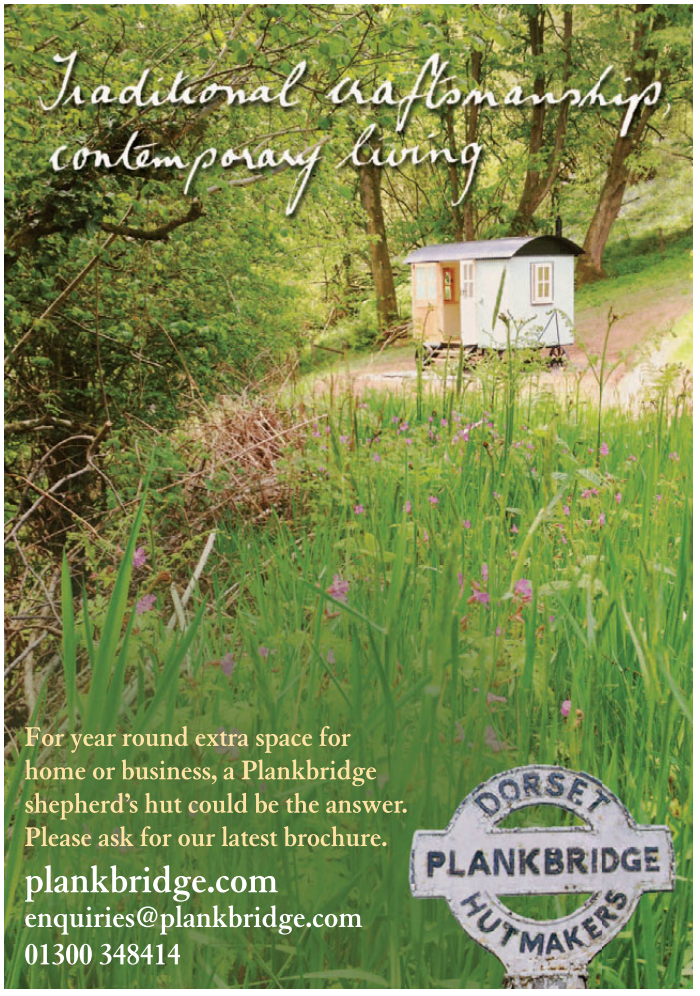


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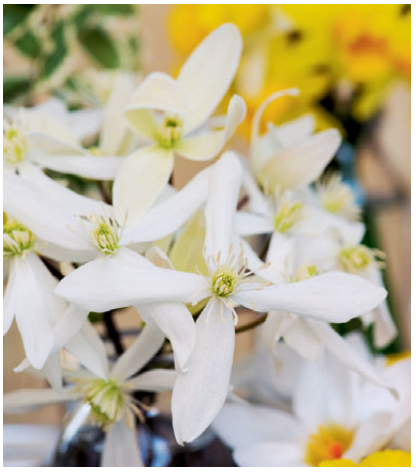
There's something appealing about a pretty posy, freshly picked from the garden and airily arranged. At this time of year, there's a certain satisfaction in the notion of 'less is more'; the very act of strolling around the garden, randomly plucking a handful of blooms, becomes a joy heightened by the promise of what is to follow. And, curiously, the flowers almost seem to arrange themselves in the hand, requiring little more than a passing tweak once in a little vase or jug.

In every month of the year, even a small garden can yield sufficient flowers for a simple posy, supplemented if necessary with blossom or berries from hedgerows. Foliage is an essential foil to flower colour, and evergreens such as pittosporum, heavenly bamboo and choisya ensure a year-round supply. The colder months bring many fragrant





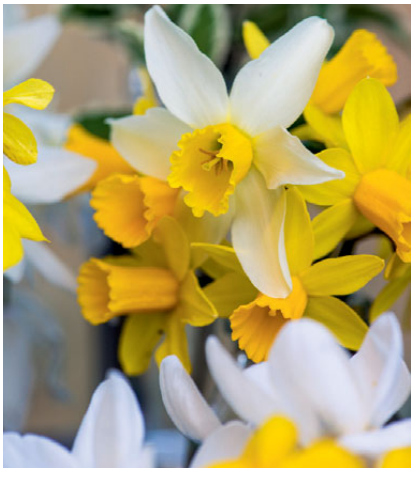






Late-winter lovelies

Pick a cheery posy of gold and white flowers in the dark days of late winter to brighten up your bedside table. White *Crocus* x *chrysanthus* 'Aubade' (*above left*) work well with the variegated foliage of *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Variegatum (*above*) and scented *Clematis armandii* (*above right*). This February delight also includes winter-flowering violas (*Viola* x *wittrockiana - left*) and miniature daffodils *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-Tête' and 'Jack Snipe' (*right*). Add scent with *Jasminum nudiflorum*.



flowers such as crocuses, violas and jasmine, their strong scent being nature's ploy to attract the few available pollinating insects. Scented clematis make lovely cut flowers - for early spring, try *C. cirrhosa* types and *C. armandii* - but they must go into water immediately after cutting.

Come spring, the hedgerows awake with blackthorn and cherry plum blossom, both with a short vase life, but easily replaced. Not so hellebores, which can last a few days indoors. However, some picked hellebores wilt, so try plunging the stems into boiling water for a minute prior to arranging, as well as pricking the stems just behind the flowerhead. But if they still wilt, pick the heads alone and float them on water in a broad, shallow bowl.

Discover what to grow and pick later in the season in our Spring issue, out in April.









The early spring collection

Create a vision in pink with an assortment of glass jars or bottles displaying individual cut flowers - stunning on a windowsill or sideboard. Make March magic in the garden and the house using plants such as Japanese flowering quince (*Chaenomeles* x *superba* 'Pink Lady' - *above right*); *Helleborus* x *hybridus* Ashwood Garden Hybrids (*left*); cherry blossom from *Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra', black cherry plum (*right*); blackthorn blossom (*Prunus spinosa*); and *Cyclamen coum*.



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Narcissus 'Cape Cornwall' makes an excellent garden plant, with pristine flowers.

TRUMPET MAJORS

Noel Kingsbury discovers some of the best new varieties of daffodil, bred by specialists from Cornwall to the USA ▸

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS



LEFT 'Dan du Plessis' is named after a prominent Cornish breeder and grower. **BELOW** The unusual, white-petalled 'Polgooth'.

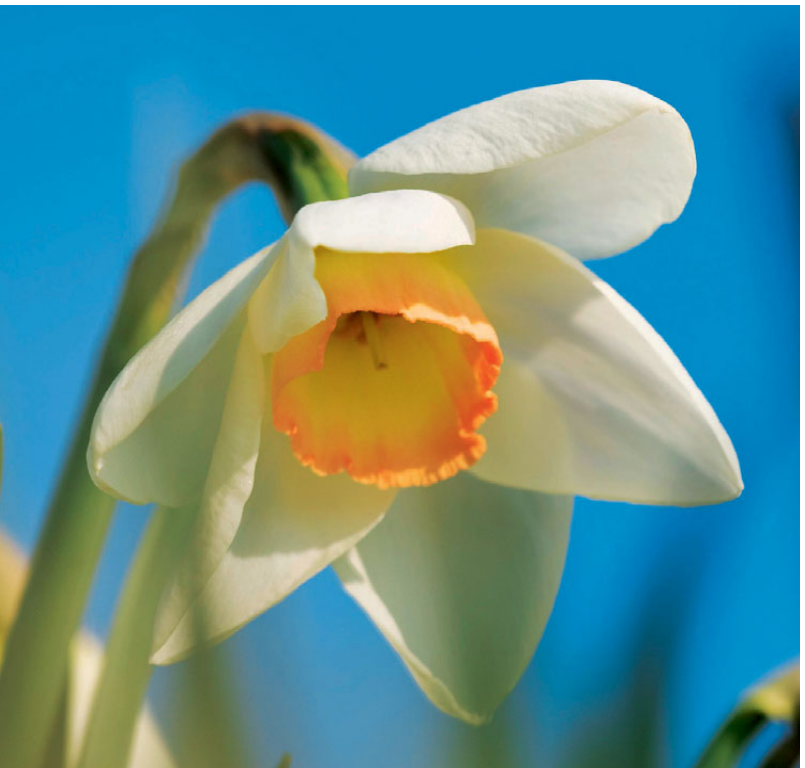
Spring would not be spring without daffodils. From the very end of winter to the first days of summer, we enjoy their blooms and their seemingly endless variations. There are around 26,000 different varieties, yet breeders continue to produce more, ever seeking something more perfect in shape and colour, or with better garden qualities, or - increasingly - to do something radically different.

Daffodils flourish in the British climate. Our long growing season is ideal for a plant whose ancestors are essentially western Mediterranean, where the climate allows plants to grow slowly during a long, mild and relatively moist winter. The only daffodil from the eastern Mediterranean, where conditions are more severe, is *Narcissus tazetta*; like a tulip, it needs a hot summer's baking to flower again the next year. But having the finest scent of all, breeders have always tried to incorporate its genes into new varieties. **'Dan du Plessis'** is one such, named for a prominent Cornish breeder and grower who did much to promote both flower and county. Du Plessis has also had another named for him: **'John Daniel'**, a double.

Cornwall has one of the best daffodil-growing climates of all, and the county has always been at the centre of the daffodil-growing world. Based just outside Falmouth, breeder and grower Ron Scamp is the latest in a long series of local growers. Like many in this business, much of his spring is spent exhibiting at shows, for it is at these events that the potential varieties of the future are spotted.

Propagating daffodils, however, is a slow business and it may take many years for there to be enough

Propagating daffodils is a slow business and it may take years for there to be enough bulbs of a good new variety to sell



HEIRLOOM DAFFODILS

The three varieties pictured right - **'Bath's Flame'** (1), **'Firebrand'** (2) and **'Elegance'** (3) - are all 'heirloom' varieties, largely ignored for the past century. But with a number of growers, such as Ron Scamp, now offering them for sale, there has been a revival of interest. These were all bred by the Rev. George Engleheart (1851-1936) who worked on daffodils between 1882 and 1923, and is often spoken of as the man who really launched the modern flower. Working largely with existing garden varieties, he did much original and adventurous breeding, and was one of the first to work with ***Narcissus poeticus***, the late-flowering, scented, white species with a small but intensely coloured orange trumpet. Producing more than 700 varieties, he was not particularly systematic or commercially orientated. Having lost money, he ended up selling his collection to a Scottish laird, The Brodie of Brodie, who went on to become a great breeder.







bulbs of a good new variety to sell. Limited sales to enthusiasts who show the flowers are the first step; next, a few more growers may take a variety up. Eventually, a select few find their way into a bulb dealer's catalogue - someone like Ron, who sells to connoisseur growers as well as the general public. Only the exceptional plant makes it all the way to the general garden-centre trade.

Ron is one of the UK's leading breeders. Many of the daffodils he has bred are 'good show flowers', he says, such as 'Zekiah', 'a good strong plant, sharp-looking; or **'Cape Cornwall'**, where every single flower is pristine'. But it is also important that such perfect-looking flowers perform in less than perfect conditions. 'Cape Cornwall' is 'magnificent in the garden,' he says, 'as is **'Polgooth'**, one I introduced 10 years ago'. ▶

ABOVE 'John Daniel' is a striking double variety. **TOP RIGHT** 'Orange Supreme' was bred in Oregon and is noted for its symmetry. **RIGHT** *Narcissus poeticus* var. *recurvus* - the pheasant's eye daffodil.







BELOW, TOP LEFT 'Pink Silk' is noted for its full petals. **BELOW LEFT** 'Katherine Jenkins' was named for the Welsh singer. **CENTRE** 'Kokopelli' is relatively compact. **RIGHT** 'Welsh Warrior' is named for the 200th solider to die in Afghanistan.

How plants are named is important for their commercial future too. **'Welsh Warrior'**, Ron explains, is 'named for the 200th soldier to die in Afghanistan, and some of the earnings go to a charity, to a foundation set up by his mother to provide support to injured troops from Wales'. **'Katherine Jenkins'** was named for the singer, who chose it from a batch of new varieties at the RHS Spring Show in Cardiff in 2007.

Daffodils have very much followed British settlers around the world, people and plants thriving in similar conditions. There are daffodil enthusiasts in New Zealand, Australia and the US; and it is the American breeders who have proven to be some of the most innovative. Many of the best varieties were bred by Grant Mitsch, whose daughter, Elise Havens, continues to produce excellent new varieties in Oregon (whose climate can be likened to Cornwall, but with a better summer).

'Orange Supreme' and **'Pink Silk'** are two of hers, always noted for their full petals and perfect symmetry. 'Intrigue' was bred by another American, William Pannill - it is descended from the wild jonquil, a species noted for its good scent. It is distinctive for being a 'reverse bicolour', so instead of the outer corona being paler than the trumpet, which is the normal pattern, the trumpet is paler.

'Kokopelli' is another jonquil, and a relatively dwarf one. All breeders now are focusing on more compact plants, as so many daffodils are grown in tubs, window boxes or in small gardens. The goal is always to find the next 'Tête-à-tête', the tiny variety bred in the 1940s whose sales are now in the millions. It was bred by a fruit farmer on the Scilly Isles called Alec Gray, who made a hobby of highly innovative breeding, particularly smaller varieties. 'Kokopelli' was bred by Robert Spotts, in California, and named for a mythical Native American figure.

Spotts and another California breeder called Harold Koopowitz are the real radicals in the daffodil world, working with obscure species that have not been touched by previous breeders. From them, we may one day get autumn-flowering types, green varieties, star-shaped flowers or even exotically fragrant plants. The future of the daffodil looks like an exciting one. ◆

Breeders are focusing on more compact plants, as so many daffodils are grown in tubs, window boxes or small gardens









WHERE TO SEE & BUY DAFFODILS

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- **Guy L. Wilson Daffodil Garden** Commemorates this great 20th-century breeder. University of Ulster, Coleraine, N. Ireland BT52 1SA. Tel: +44 (0)28 7032 4431. www.discovernorthernireland.com
- **RHS Garden Wisley** Many types growing; unusual species naturalised in grass. Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB. Tel: 0845 2609000. www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley
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SHADY CHARACTERS

Tom Mitchell recalls a happy week in the USA, hunting for wild trilliums

ILLUSTRATION HELEN CAMPBELL



Tom Mitchell studied biology before working as a City banker. He now runs Evolution Plants near Bradford on Avon, where he sells many new varieties of plants he sources on his expeditions abroad. www.evolution-plants.com

We humans like to think that we're pretty clever. We've walked on the moon, split the atom and sent submarines to the bottom of the Mariana Trench. Physicists confirmed the existence of a new fundamental particle, the Higgs boson, in 2012.

Yes, we are pretty clever - but we remain so ignorant of our own backyard that no-one knows how many flowering plant species we share our planet with. A conservative estimate puts the total at 250,000, but the true number may be double that. We are ignorant because, deep down, we don't care. By the end of this financial year, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew - brainchild of Darwin's friend Joseph Hooker - will have made 100 full-time posts redundant, 47 of them scientists, due to a £5 million budget shortfall. The same sum was reportedly spent in four months powering the Large Hadron Collider, where the Higgs boson was discovered.

Wherever we look closely, we find more plant species. I have mentioned previously in this column a friend, Aaron Floden, a brilliant field botanist and student of plant diversity, who works at the University of Tennessee herbarium at Knoxville. A few years ago, he was sent photographs of a trillium species by a landowner in Tennessee who had noticed it growing on his property and couldn't identify it. Aaron and his colleagues were excited, because the pictures clearly suggested that the plant was new to science. It turned out to be an undescribed species, overlooked by the world until an observant landowner sent a picture to one of the handful of people in the world expert enough to realise that he was looking at something new. It has been named *Trillium tennesseense*.

I spent a deeply satisfying week in April 2012 with Aaron and another friend, driving thousands of miles around the southeastern USA to study wild populations of trilliums. We worked our way south through the pecan plantations of Georgia to cotton-growing country in Alabama. We then turned east and dipped into the northern tip of Florida, before returning to Aaron's home in Tennessee via South and North Carolina. We saw 10 species of trillium and masses of other spring-flowering plants associated with them.

My first encounter with wild trilliums is the one I'll remember the longest. We were truly in the boondocks. The only habitations we'd passed for an hour or more were decomposing trailers, deposited sparsely and seemingly at random beside the road. John pulled our truck over next to a little slow-flowing creek and set off into the woods. I followed him along a narrow deer trail until he stopped and announced that we'd arrived at the colony.

Slowly, my eyes adjusted to the gloom of the forest interior and I started to pick out trilliums. They were everywhere

Slowly, my eyes adjusted to the gloom of the forest interior and I started to pick out trilliums. They were everywhere, but almost perfectly camouflaged against the leaf litter, the leaves mottled in shades of green, russet and cream. There were two species here, growing side by side but apparently not hybridising: *T. decumbens* and *T. cuneatum*. The first of these looked almost comical. It appeared as though someone had gone through the population and cut the stems out from under



each plant, so that the rosette of leaves seemed to sit directly on the leaf litter. Gently lifting the leaves revealed that the stem was still there, but had been twisted by natural selection into a clear 'S'. In contrast, *T. cuneatum* stood ramrod straight, on tall stems, the reddish flowers held far above the heads of its sister species. Threading through the colony was a lovely geranium, *G. maculatum* or alum root. I have grown the excellent selection 'Beth Chatto' for years, and it was thrilling to see her wild cousins.

The days that followed were filled with similar treats. We botanised for 14 hours a day, starting early and finishing late, exploring the swampy woodlands, ignoring the omnipresent poison ivy and the occasional suspicious stare from a passing truck. In the evenings, we retired to a bar or restaurant in this part of the world where prohibition is still alive and well. Once, we had to join a private members' club for the night, the only legal way to buy a beer in an otherwise dry county. Beers in hand, we re-enacted the events of the day: three obsessives sharing a love of the diversity of life on Earth, and the thrill of encountering it in the wilderness that is left.

Next issue: Tom discovers an unusual hellebore, *Helleborus vesicarius*, on a plant-hunting trip.

Trillium tennesseense

Helen Campbell is an award-winning, Cotswold-based botanical artist and tutor. www.helencampbellart.co.uk

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A FINE LINE

Think outside the box when planting an avenue or line of trees, with advice from **Maria Bengtsson** of Majestic Trees



Betula utilis var. *jacquemontii*

Renowned for its white bark and elegant, upright habit, the Himalayan birch is often used as a single specimen tree or as part of a smaller group. However, when planted en masse, the profusion of white is breathtaking. In summer, the dark-green leaves contrast beautifully against the bark, later turning golden in autumn. Come winter, the naked tree appears to glow. Being mainly produced from seed, the quality can vary; but, if properly selected, it is, without question, one of the most beautiful trees on the planet. Reaches 12m after 20 years.



Nyssa sylvatica

When autumn makes its entrance, nothing rivals the fiery display of this tree. With colours ranging from orange and yellow to red and purple, this tree is captivating. Although somewhat more anonymous during the rest of the season, its handsome pyramidal habit, glossy dark-green foliage and attractive bark offers plenty of interest. In addition, the tree also provides fruit for birds and nectar for bees. Oddly enough, it isn't that widely used, which is very sad considering its superb ornamental value. Reaches 8m after 20 years.



Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer'

This American cultivar is a brilliant choice where lateral space is limited. The crown develops into a lovely upright-pyramidal form, retaining its shape with minimal pruning. In spring, the flowers unfold in a cascade of white and blush, later accompanied by the emerging glossy foliage, followed by small brown fruits. As summer departs, the leaves phase to a carmine-red, often persisting to Christmas if the weather is mild. This ornamental pear has been named 'the perfect street tree', so why not the perfect avenue tree? Reaches 7m after 20 years.

IMAGES/ALL GAP PHOTOS FROM LEFT CHARLES HAWES (THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDEN OF WALES) JO WHITWORTH ELKE BORKOWSKI

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IMAGE/LYNN KEDDIE

EARLY ARRIVALS

Does spring take a while to arrive in your garden? **Matthew Biggs** recommends 10 great plants guaranteed to provide welcome early colour

The traditional way of overcoming the grey and cold of late winter is to plant snowdrops and daffodils in profusion, flooding the garden with colour. But there is a group of beautiful, more unusual plants, often from unexpected genera, that also illuminate the gloom with elegance, style and often scent. These bulbs, perennials, shrubs or small trees foreshorten winter, provide much-needed interest and are true harbingers of spring.

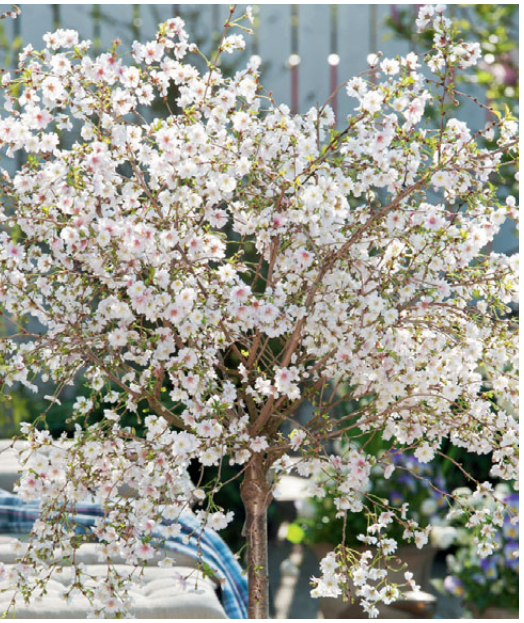
Position these choice plants in a spot in the garden where they will thrive - and ideally one where you can enjoy them easily in winter, too. This could be a spot that can be readily viewed from a window, or a place that you walk past frequently, such as a driveway, path or doorway. Alternatively, wrap up warm, venture outside and walk around your garden to appreciate its beauty in winter. Then pick a small posy of blooms to prolong the pleasure when you are safely back indoors. ▶

ABOVE *Hepatica nobilis* is a must for bringing colour to the late winter and early spring garden. The flowers come in many colours, from white to pink and blue. See pg 88 for more details.

1 → *Rhododendron* 'Praecox'



Rhododendron 'Praecox' is one of a small group of compact, late-winter-flowering rhododendrons. Its rose-purple flowers appear in clusters of two or three at the shoot tips. Massed blooms cover the whole plant with colour - an uplifting sight at this time of year, and an unusual one, as most rhododendrons flower in late spring. It needs moist, acidic, free-draining soil in bright light or dappled shade, plus protection from frost, which damages the flowers. Improve the soil with well-rotted organic matter if needed, and mulch annually in spring.



2 ← *Prunus incisa* 'February Pink'

After illuminating the autumn days with a spectacular display of yellow foliage, this large shrub or small tree, a form of the Fuji cherry, continues to charm in late winter and early spring. Its delicate pale-pink flowers generally appear in February or early March, although the blooms can appear earlier or later in the season - even November if temperatures allow. It thrives in well-drained soil, particularly where lime is present, and combines well with green-flowered hellebores like *Helleborus argutifolius* or *Helleborus foetidus*.



3 → *Erica* x *darleyensis* f. *albiflora* 'Silberschmelze'

This form of the Darley Dale Heath is a vigorous, bushy evergreen. In late winter and early spring, it is clothed with a massed display of wonderful, fragrant flowers of the purest white. As an added attraction, the tiny, lance-shaped leaves are tinted rusty-red in winter too. Lime tolerant (but not of shallow chalk), it is happy in a cold, windy site in full sun. It also looks attractive planted in traditional terracotta or more contemporary pots.



4 ← *Lonicera elisae*

This compact, upright, medium-sized, shrubby 'honeysuckle' from China is rarely seen in British gardens. It displays white, narrow, funnel-shaped flowers, tinged pink on the outside, in evenly spaced clusters, from January through to March. What it lacks in fragrance, it more than compensates for in elegance and early flowers; the spring foliage is dark-purple before turning green later in the season. *Lonicera elisae* needs full sun or dappled shade on any moist soil to do well, plus shelter from cold winter winds. It flowers on new wood.



5 ← *Edgeworthia chrysantha*

Edgeworthia chrysantha is one of the most beautiful of all the early flowering shrubs. Dense hanging clusters of flowers, at the end of each twig, hold more than 50 highly fragrant, rich cowslip-yellow blooms, clothed in a layer of silky white hairs. The young stems are so supple that they can be tied into knots. The old stems are covered in attractive, papery bark (hence its common name, the paper bush). This deciduous shrub needs a warm, sheltered, frost-free position on well-drained, moisture-retentive soil in order to flourish.



IMAGES/ALL GAP PHOTOS OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP/LEE AVISON FRIEDRICH STRAUSS FREDERIC DIDILLON HOWARD RICE. THIS PAGE, FROM TOP/LUCY GRIFFITHS PERNILLA BERGDAHL HOWARD RICE

6 → *Iris danfordiae*

It's always a pleasure to greet the bright-yellow flowers of *Iris danfordiae* when they appear in late winter, a cheerful reminder that springtime and sunshine are not far behind. Grow them in pots, or in clumps or large drifts at the front of the border on alkaline, free-draining soil. *Iris danfordiae* make a fabulous sight when grown among silver-foliaged plants such as cyclamen or combined with chionodoxas. The bulbs are inexpensive and are better treated as annuals - if left, they have a habit of splitting into clumps of non-flowering bulbs.



7 ← *Ribes laurifolium*

This evergreen, low-growing, loosely branched shrub boasts leathery evergreen leaves, reddish young stems and curious greenish-white flowers, which look disproportionally large. The flowers contrast nicely with plum-flowered hellebores or *Skimmia japonica* 'Rubella'. *Ribes laurifolium* needs a sheltered site, in an open spot or in part shade, protected from scorching summer sun or cold winds. It also likes moisture-retentive, well-drained soil. It is slow growing, and takes several years to establish, but your patience will be well rewarded. ▶



8 ← *Pulmonaria rubra*

This pretty little lungwort, the earliest of the group to bloom, produces coral-red flowers in late winter and beyond. It is semi-evergreen, and the attractive and bright, fresh, mid-green leaves often remain, particularly in mild winters. *Pulmonaria rubra* needs a humus-rich, well-drained soil. It is ideal for the front of a shady or woodland border, in full or dappled shade. Ensure that the plants do not dry out in summer, or powdery mildew will be a problem.

9 → *Hepatica nobilis*

Hepatica nobilis is a beautiful, slow-growing, mound-shaped plant with petite flowers in shades of blue, pink or white. The pretty rounded leaves, which are purple underneath, are replaced after flowering each spring. *Hepatica nobilis* is happy at the front of borders, in rock gardens or in containers. It does best in part shade on any moisture-retentive soil, so top dress in autumn with some leaf mould. It will tolerate heavy soils, even clay, but dislikes being moved.





10 ← *Cornus mas*

Mention 'cornus' and gardeners think instantly of brightly coloured, bare winter stems or flamboyant bracts in late spring and early summer - not a haze of pretty yellow flowers on bare twigs in late winter. This robust, densely branched large shrub or small tree also bears glossy, red, cherry-like fruits that can be used to make jam. But in reality, these are more attractive to wildlife than to the gardener. To flourish, *Cornus mas* needs a place in the garden that has moisture-retentive, free-draining soil in full sun or part shade. ◆

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This walled garden is where Jo Campbell grows produce used in the kitchens of Restaurant Andrew Fairlie at the five-star Gleneagles Hotel & Resort in Scotland.

THE SPACE *for taste*

Grower Jo Campbell has created a fantastic edible garden for two-Michelin-star chef Andrew Fairlie, to supply his restaurant at Gleneagles ▸

PHOTOGRAPHY RAY COX | **WORDS** TAMSIN WESTHORPE

Creating a productive kitchen garden for a two-Michelin-star chef is no mean feat. Add to this the fact that the garden is in Scotland, and you have quite a challenging climate to deal with as well. Renowned chef Andrew Fairlie had the sense to employ experienced grower Jo Campbell, previously of Raymond Blanc's Oxfordshire hotel Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, to create the kitchen garden he had been dreaming of.

Andrew's restaurant is located at the famous Gleneagles hotel and resort in Perthshire. The restaurant opened to hotel guests and non-residents in 2001. With no kitchen garden at the resort, Andrew searched for many years for a place to grow his own fruit and veg. In 2013, he found a private Victorian walled kitchen garden about 10 miles from the restaurant. 'The garden is two and a half acres, and was once a market garden that grew cut flowers for the hotel,' Jo explains. 'I started work here in August 2013, and spent the first six months planning how I would work with the space. The garden was mainly laid down to herbaceous borders, and has a wonderful wooden Victorian glasshouse with heating at one end.'

She had expected to experience extreme gardening conditions from the off, but the weather has been kind so far. Her biggest challenge is working with heavy clay soil, and she is now considering adopting a no-dig technique. Jo also decided to lay out the crops so that they can be reached from paths, rather than further compacting the soil when harvesting.

'I don't grow to order, as everyone enjoys the adventure of working with a variety of produce'

Jo started out working on her own, but last year she was joined by two other gardeners, Kate Richie (Andrew's partner) and assistant grower Tina Barnes. Together they managed to far exceed expectations by growing an incredible 90% of the produce needed by the kitchen.

Head chef Stephen McLaughlin and his senior sous chef Russell Plowman visit the garden once a week. 'Andrew has given me free rein to grow a wide range of different things, and the chefs create their menus around my crops,' explains Jo. 'It is fantastic to see how the chefs are inspired by the crops they see growing here. I don't grow to order, as everyone enjoys the adventure of working with a variety of produce. If we have a bumper harvest, the menus are changed,' she says.

Micro cresses such as red-veined sorrel, pak choi and French sorrel are popular crops, as are tomatoes. 'We only grow cherry tomatoes, and in every colour except red,' Jo says. Crops are harvested three times a week, and Jo and her team are usually invited along to taste Andrew's new dishes created from the bounty. 'One recipe that remains a clear favourite is his lemon verbena ice cream,' she says.

Only parts of the site are productive at the moment, and plans have been made for a polytunnel to be erected this year. So, this could be the summer the team grows 100% of the restaurant's produce...



Traditional vegetable beds

These beds are home to seasonal crops (*above*). Wood pigeons are a problem, so the cabbages and other brassicas are netted. After growing for Michelin-star chefs for more than 12 years, Jo's preferred cane toppers are empty champagne bottles (*right*).

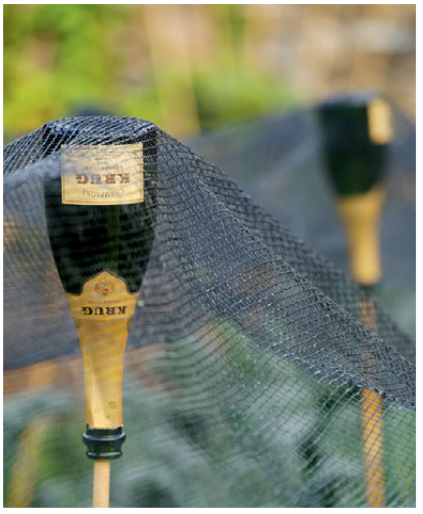


Raised beds

A series of 30 raised beds (*above*) have been built to grow successionally throughout the growing season. Cloches and fleeces are used early and late in the year to protect against rain and frost. These beds are intensively planted with baby vegetables such as summer radishes, round carrots, baby turnips and leeks. Although this is a productive garden that is not open to the public, the beds have been placed to reflect the geometry of the glasshouse.















Under glass

The wooden Victorian glasshouse is heated at one end, which allows Jo to grow micro cresses all year (*left*). The strong and earthy flavours of celery leaf, parsley cress and beetroot are grown to complement the Scottish game on Andrew's menus.

Cherry tomatoes of all types are grown along the length of the glasshouse (*above*), up the walls, with basil at their feet. The basil is used as a companion plant, and also harvested for dishes. ▶



Home-grown fruit

As well as all the vegetables, there are a few apple and plum trees in the garden, but it is alpine strawberries that are the favourite fruit of the chefs. The raised herb boxes close to the apple trees are used to grow different varieties of mint - these are used by the chefs to make mint teas, infusions and as herbs for flavour. The garden is also home to two beehives. The Scottish black bees not only help pollinate the fruiting plants, but also provide the kitchen with home-made honey.

Harvest time

Jo harvests crops three times a week. Here, baby spinach is being cut to add to a trug of salad leaves in various shades of green. Coloured stems make for a good-looking as well as tasty salad garnish. The narrow depth of the raised beds allows the gardeners to easily reach across them - preventing more compaction of the heavy clay soil.





In our Spring issue, out in April, we return to the walled garden to discover the team's growing techniques & favourite varieties & the chefs' top recipes for their crops



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Dahlia 'Star Sister'

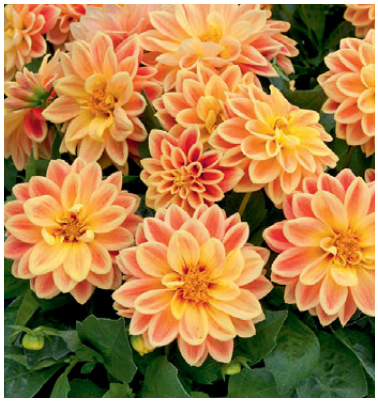
Compact and bushy, this dwarf variety is great for terrace pots, window boxes or the front of borders. Open-centred blooms are also highly attractive to bees and other pollinators. Height and spread: 30cm.

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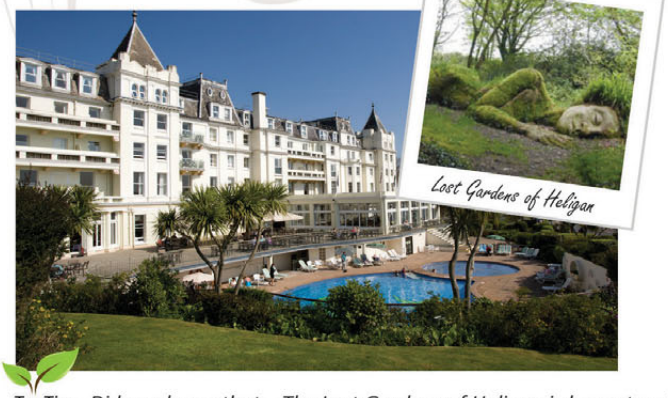
Garden Getaways in the South West

With Spring around the corner, it's a busy time for gardeners, so how about treating yourself to a combination that aims to feed the spirit and offer untold inspiration while we, at Richardson Hotels, feed the body and offer some quality R&R to invigorate the mind?

Our five coastal hotels are the perfect getaway for garden lovers with the South West itself offering an abundance of wonderful gardens of every description for you to enjoy. This time of year in particular is always popular, as the South West often boasts the first flowering Magnolia in the UK!

You can enjoy a 2 night garden break with dinner, overnight accommodation and full Westcountry breakfast and a visit to a nearby garden of your choice from all of our hotels, prices start from £99 per night.

Escape to Devon and choose from either The Grand Hotel or The Grosvenor Hotel in Torquay which offer garden breaks to neighbouring Torre Abbey and Gardens, nearby RHS Garden Rosemoor, Killerton House and Gardens and Agatha Christie's Home and Gardens at Greenway.





TopTip: - Did you know that... The Lost Gardens of Heligan is home to a National Collection of 'Rhododendrons & Camellias', the UK'S largest rhododendron and the largest collection of Tree Ferns?

The 4 star Grand Hotel sits overlooking the Bay with 132 en-suite bedrooms, panoramic views from the Compass Lounge – perfect for an Afternoon or traditional Devon Cream Tea, the AA rosette 1881 restaurant and the front facing bedrooms. Make the most of your stay with use of the leisure and spa facilities.

The 3 star Grosvenor Hotel is located close to the Bay and in sight of Torre Abbey. This 47 en-suite bedroomed hotel, close to Torquay, is a stone's throw from all the local attractions. With its Victorian architecture, it offers guests space and comfort with leisure facilities, restaurant and a retro-American style diner.





TopTip: - In 2013 the Great Gardens of Cornwall recorded the first flowering Magnolia on 19th February, in 2014 this date was a little later on the 3rd March.

Getaway to Cornwall and make the Jurasic coast your short-stay destination.

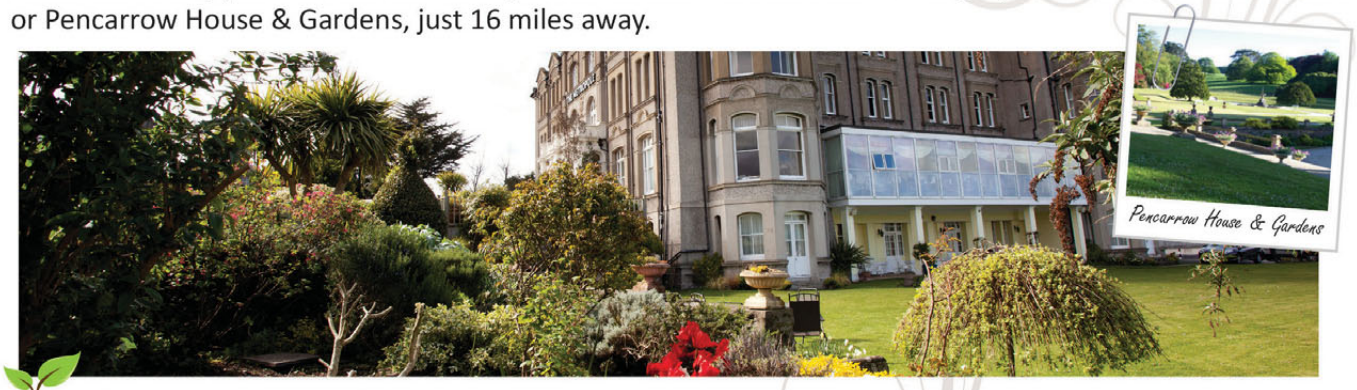
Choose from.. the 3 star, 71 bedroom Falmouth Hotel situated close to Pendennis Castle offering fabulous views over the Bay. Just 5 minutes' walk from the town, it's ideally located for those wanting to make the most of the area. The hotel itself sits in 5 acres of manicured gardens and offers spa and leisure facilities, fine and casual dining. Garden Breaks to nearby Trebah Gardens, just 5.6 miles away, Trelissick Gardens, less than 11 miles away and Trewithen Gardens, less than 20 minutes' drive are a delight for any garden lover.



TopTip: - March is the ideal time for pruning, transplanting cuttings, planting, spraying and feeding.

The 4 star, boutique Fowey Hotel offers magnificent, uninterrupted views of the Fowey River.
This 37 bedroom Victorian hotel with its terrace, tea gardens and AA rosette restaurant boasts a glorious history with strong connections to the literary world.

From The Fowey you can visit the nearby world famous Lost Gardens of Heligan, less than 15 minutes' drive or Pencarrow House & Gardens, just 16 miles away.



TopTip: - Time to turn your compost pile.

Or finally, we have the Victorian, 4 star, Metropole Hotel in Padstow with its 58 en-suite bedrooms, stunning views of the Camel Estuary and AA rosette Harbour Restaurant. With an outdoor pool and gardens, this hotel is an ideal home from home. The Metropole is the perfect place to explore Padstow, the Camel trail and surrounding attractions. The Metropole also offers breaks to nearby Pencarrow House & Gardens at just 12 miles' distance and The Lost Gardens of Heligan which is under 27 miles away.

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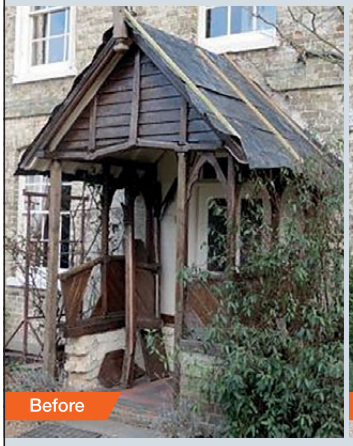
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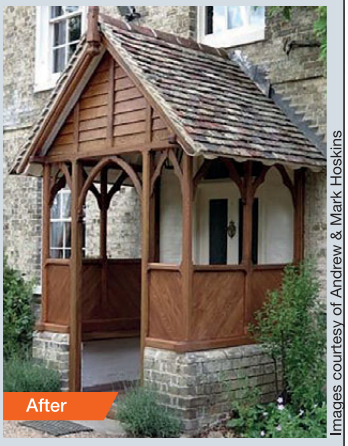
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ABOVE The new Garden of Medicinal Plants at the Chelsea Physic Garden in London is packed with common and unusual plants used in both folk remedies and modern medicine.

LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Take a trip to the Chelsea Physic Garden to be intrigued by its new Garden of Medicinal Plants both ancient and modern ▸

PHOTOGRAPHS CLIVE NICHOLS | **WORDS** PATTIE BARRON

There are so many reasons to visit the Chelsea Physic Garden: to wander around the Systematic Order Beds that detail the origins of plants' families; to admire the UK's largest outdoor-fruiting olive tree; to scrutinise the rock garden, the oldest in Europe, that was chiefly constructed with stones from the Tower of London; and to boggle at the 2m-high echiums that happily self-seed.

Not least, you can see what you might be able to grow given the favoured microclimate, south-facing aspect and well-drained soil of a warm town garden: grapefruit or pomegranate, anyone? Located right next to the Thames, the high brick walls shelter a peaceful, four-acre haven that nurtures both plants and people; a place originally founded in 1673 by the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London, so its apprentices could study the medicinal qualities of plants.

This unique physic garden, beautifully maintained by gardeners and volunteers, could easily have rested on its well-documented laurels. But instead, with the inspired hand of maverick head gardener Nick Bailey, it has evolved greatly in the past few years, giving us yet more reasons to come back, again and again.

In 2011, Nick and his gardening team created a half-acre plot of edible and useful plants that, inspired by 18th-century potagers in design, aims to bring us closer to the plants on which humanity depends. 'Plants are our best resource,' explains Nick. 'They're renewable, they're sustainable, they produce oxygen and they give us virtually everything we need to live, if we care to look at them hard enough. Discover through the plants and their information panels that, for example, the fluffy seed pods of cotton were used to make celluloid film; the spines of prickly pear cactus were employed to play records on early gramophones; that soybean is the main constituent in today's inexpensive recyclable ink; and that sunflowers are sown, as they were at Chernobyl, to remove radioactive particles from the ground. A bamboo thicket represents the world's most useful plant, the accompanying panel listing its diverse uses that range from blinds to beer, flooring to furniture.



MEDICINAL MAGIC

Last year, Nick brought the medicinal plant collection into the 21st century by creating a new one-acre garden, beautifully laid out with reclaimed brick paving, drystone walls and hand-crafted medicine cabinets labelled with gilded script. They open to reveal detailed information about the plants, selected for their role in the world of medicine, past, present and future. 'We wanted to make the collections that we had more accessible, as well as to greatly increase them,' he explains. With the help of eight staff and 25 volunteers, the Garden of Medicinal Plants was set up in a scant five months. 'We wanted to tell the stories of these medicinal plants and how they've touched our lives, how they made the transition from hand-me-down cures to today's regulated medicines, and how they're inextricably woven into our survival and future.'

The Future Medicines Bed displays plants that have just been licensed or are still being researched. Petty spurge or ▶









FAR LEFT Head gardener Nick Bailey. **LEFT** The new medicinal plants area contains everything from agapanthus to ricinus, and is bordered by drystone walls, with reclaimed brick paving. **TOP** A brand new statue of Sir Hans Sloane, the 17th-century doctor who bought and leased the garden to the Worshipful Society of Apothecaries for £5 a year in perpetuity. **ABOVE** *Hibiscus trionum* was once used to treat itchy skin conditions.

Euphorbia peplus, the common weed, is intentionally included: it has just been given the green light to treat skin cancers topically. Banana and coconut palm signify their important role in HIV/AIDs research, while the hemp plant flourishes here because of its ability, via Sativex®, a newly licensed product, to relieve symptoms of MS.

There are many familiar garden plants: here is oleander in the Mediterranean bed, known to be toxic ever since the Roman army discovered, due to a mass poisoning of their troops, that the stems of oleander do not make suitable skewers for cooking meat; there is a broad bean plant in the Neurology bed, present because the amino acid L-dopa, found in the bean, is used to treat Parkinson's disease.

STRANGE & UNUSUAL

Getting hold of less-common plants, however, was a challenge. 'In the pharmaceutical section, there are all sorts of oddities you can't buy anywhere. Luckily we're part of the Index Seminum, a seed-sharing scheme between 300 botanical gardens. So if we're looking for something really odd, like ephedra, which contains pseudoephedrine, the base for Sudafed, we look it up, and see we can get it from China.'

The Herbal Remedies bed, revelling in a warm corner between the outsize olive tree and the magnificent fruiting grapefruit tree, deserves this pride of place because, as Nick explains, 80% of the world's population relies mainly on herbal medicine as a source of primary health care. The plants in this bed, which include *Ginkgo biloba* (now the top-selling herbal extract in Europe), *Echinacea purpurea*, *Valeriana officinalis* and ginseng, have long been used as folk remedies. Although *Hypericum perforatum* is included due to its purported relief of depression, passiflora appears too as, says Nick, it may be more effective.

In the heart of the garden stands a sculpture that represents the global medicinal symbol, the serpent on the staff. It could have been made of, say, stone or bronze, but in true quirky and wonderful Chelsea Physic Garden style, the serpent was crafted from willow by one of the freelance gardeners, its beady eyes recycled from a pair of glass doorknobs.

Chelsea Physic Garden, 66 Royal Hospital Rd, SW3 4HS. Open until 31 March, Mon-Fri, 9.30am-4pm; and 1 April-31 Oct, Tues-Fri, Sun & bank holidays, 9.30am-6pm. www.chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk









FROM TOP *Dichroa febrifuga* is one of the 50 fundamental herbs of traditional Chinese medicine; the flowers of chicory, which was often used in folk remedies to treat a variety of ailments; the woven willow serpent on the staff in the centre of the new garden; these handmade 'medicine cabinet' information boxes contain details on how the surrounding plants are and were used medicinally.

in our april issue

A DREAM IN GREEN



FEATURING 5 SEASONAL PLOTS PACKED WITH TULIPS
& OUR TOP 10 SPRING GARDENS TO VISIT THIS YEAR

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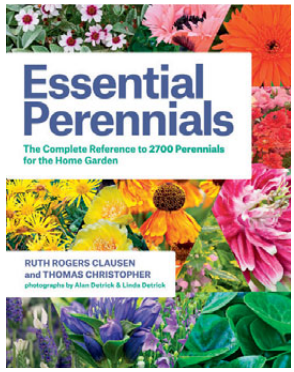
THE REVIEWER

James Wong and Charles Dowding are just two of the authors whose new books we review, and we speak to Jane Courtier, co-writer of *Beds & Borders*

BOOK REVIEWS

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by Ruth Rogers Clausen & Thomas Christopher
(Timber Press, £35)



'Trees and shrubs provide architecture,' it says in the introduction of this book. 'Annuals may embroider the design, but it's the perennials that supply the enduring keynotes of texture, the calculated sequences and rhythms of colours and forms.' Its authors, garden experts Ruth Rogers Clausen and Thomas Christopher, know a thing or two about perennials, and this weighty tome is an A-to-Z reference guide to 2,700 of them for the home garden - from acanthus to zizia - to help gardeners choose.

The format is clear, it's easy to navigate around, and there's plenty of interesting and helpful detail interspersed with colour photos. Each entry lists flower colour, bloom time, foliage characteristics, size, light and temperature requirements, cultivation advice and design tips.

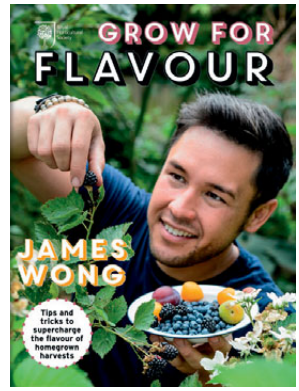
As well as the mammoth A-to-Z section, there's 18 pages explaining the basics of perennials and a wealth of tips on pinching and deadheading, staking and support, coping with pests and diseases and so on. And there's another A to Z at the end of the book listing common names.

The authors write with authority yet accessibility, and their expertise leaps off the page, letting the reader know they're in good hands and can trust the information provided. A graduate of the New York Botanical Garden School of Professional Horticulture, Thomas has worked for almost 40 years creating gardens for clients, and Welsh woman Ruth trained at Studley College and has been teaching and writing within horticulture for more than 50 years. Both authors live in America, so there's a smattering of references to 'color' and 'Fall', but that should in no way impede your enjoyment of this book.

Reviewed by Sarah Feeley

RHS Grow For Flavour

by James Wong
(Mitchell Beazley, £20)



Anyone who's ever winced through a mouthful of their own home-grown produce can learn how to supercharge their flavours thanks to James Wong's new RHS book.

TV gardener James became an RHS ambassador last year, and he's passionate about communicating plant science to new audiences in relevant and accessible ways.

So that explains why the look and feel of this book is very Jamie Oliver: colourful contemporary photography, playful design, bitesize chunks of text, an informal tone of voice and plenty of shots of our handsome hero author.

But this isn't a case of style over substance. James studied at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, graduating with a masters degree in ethnobotany (the scientific study of the relationships between people and plants). He's obsessed with plants, and has travelled the world undertaking field work in under-utilised crop species and traditional food systems. This book is packed with stats and science cleverly packaged to make it engaging and accessible.

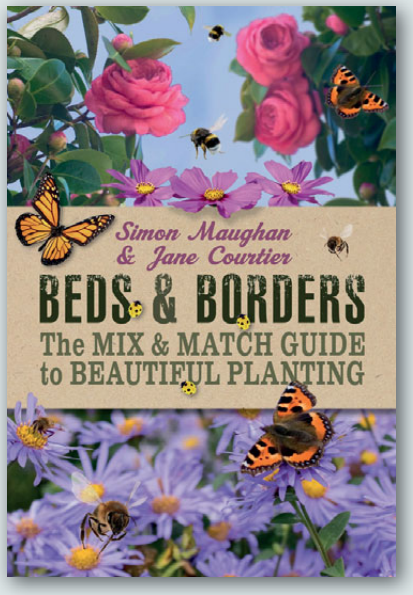
James says a lot of standard gardening advice is geared towards the dogged pursuit of yield at the expense of flavour, and plagued by myths. He has trialled and tasted hundreds of varieties in a mammoth flavour experiment, and reviewed more than 2,000 global scientific studies, 'translating the geek speak into a simple set of tips and tricks', says the blurb. The Wong way involves less effort and input, he says, and this book includes 36 simple recipes to showcase your supercharged home harvests.

Don't be put off by this '30-minute meals'-style approach. If it attracts more, new, younger gardeners, that's all to the good - and there is solid science backing up this book.

Reviewed by Sarah Feeley ▶

INTERVIEW

Beds & Borders **by Simon Maughan and Jane Courtier (Ivy Press, £9.99) uses a clever split-page format allowing readers to flip through and match up the colour guide to choose harmonious and complementary plant mixes. We spoke to co-author Jane Courtier.**



Who did you both have in mind when you were creating the book?
I hope it will be useful to both brand new gardeners and old hands. No matter how many years we've been gardening, there's always room for new ideas.

How did you decide which plants made it onto the split-page directory?
A certain amount of wrangling, lobbying and persuasion. It's very difficult to decide on what is really just a handful out of the vast number of wonderful plants available, but with a bit of luck there is something for everyone.

Can you name your favourite plant combination found in the book?
No - there are so many, and with so many different attributes. It all depends on just what you are looking for at any particular time. Among my favourite plants are *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle', a little gem for the front of a border with its long-lasting, finely filigreed silver foliage, and *Sedum* 'Herbstfreude', whose rosy pink, late-summer flowers are an absolute magnet for butterflies and bees. They are both easy-going plants that deserve a place in every garden.

What is the most common border planning mistake?
Not realising the potential height of plants - it's so disappointing when the prized new specimen you set in the middle of the border is completely obscured by a taller, more rampant specimen in front of it. But do make a note of any mistakes that you spot like this, because you can always put them right by moving plants in the late autumn or early spring. I find a camera is one of the most useful 'garden tools' - take plenty of pictures through the year to remind you of things you want to change.

What is the most important piece of advice you'd offer a gardener when planning a border?
When you are starting from scratch, it really is worth making sure you prepare the soil thoroughly, as you won't have the chance again. Get rid of all the perennial weeds you can, and add plenty of rotted garden compost or (if you can get hold of it) farmyard manure. This will give the plants a great start, and make it much easier for you to keep the border in tip-top condition in years to come.

Horticultural history brought to life

Tweet TREAT

For a fascinating fusion of horticulture and history, check out the Twitter account @KewDC.

The Directors' Correspondence collection at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is packed with original letters written by plant hunters and botanical gardens staff around the world to the Kew directors between the 1840s and 1920s. A team at Kew is painstakingly indexing and photographing each item to create a digital archive that's easily accessible by anyone anywhere in the world.

The team's Twitter account offers daily nuggets from this collection, historic hidden gems and revealing quotes from old letters, such as from 19th-century plant hunter Joseph Burke, who wrote in 1845 of an eventful expedition: 'The people killed a dog and ate him. I was not quite hungry enough to join them.'

COMPILED BY SARAH FEELEY & TAMSIN WESTHORPE

MARCH'S FRESH PICKINGS

How to Create a New Vegetable Garden

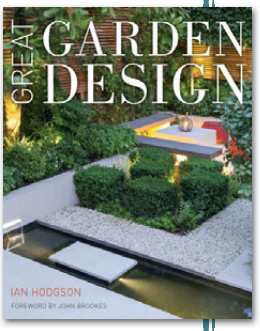
by Charles Dowding (Green Books, £19.99)



No-dig pioneer Charles Dowding draws on his many years of experience to show step by step how easy it is to start a new vegetable garden. Any plot, he says - whether a building site, overgrown with weeds or unwanted lawn - can be turned into a beautiful and productive vegetable area. His expert tips, delivered in his no-nonsense style, will help absolute beginners and experienced gardeners alike.

Great Garden Design

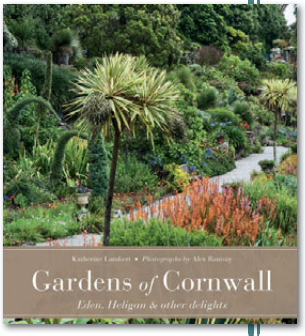
by Ian Hodgson (Frances Lincoln, £25)



Showcasing the best garden designs of the past 10 years from more than 50 top designers, this book offers cutting-edge design solutions for every situation, every location, all tastes and budgets, and any size of garden. Feast your eyes on the talents of celebrated designers such as Cleve West, Dan Pearson, Andy Sturgeon, Luciano Giubbilei, Charlotte Rowe, Ian Kitson, John Brookes and Tom Stuart Smith, plus lesser-known designers who deserve recognition. There are tips galore, helpful points to consider, and key details that make all the difference.

Gardens of Cornwall

by Katherine Lambert (Frances Lincoln, £12.99)



Cornish gardens have an identity all their own, with an exotic exuberance thanks to the county's wet and mild climate. This new paperback version of Katherine Lambert's fabulous book captures their magic superbly, featuring 24 spectacular Cornish gardens, from St Michael's Mount to Heligan and from The Eden Project to Tresco on the Scilly Isles.

FOR SPRING COLOUR

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Caerhays Estate, Gorran, St Austell, Cornwall, PL26 6LY
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Email: enquiries@caerhays.co.uk | www.caerhays.co.uk

The gardens at Caerhays Castle are a horticultural treasure trove. In a sheltered valley on the south Cornish coast the 120 acres are a springtime paradise of glorious camellias, magnolias and rhododendrons towering above carpets of delicate narcissi and primroses. The Magnolia Tea Rooms are open for refreshments and the gift shop in the courtyard stocks a varied selection of local and own-branded products.

OPEN: 16 February - 21 June daily 10am - 5pm

MYDDELTON HOUSE GARDENS

Bulls Cross, Enfield, Middlesex, EN2 9HG
Tel: 08456 770 600 | Email: info@leevalleypark.org.uk | www.visitleevalley.org.uk

Marvel at the spectacular selection of snowdrops on display at Myddelton House Gardens and discover the world of EA Bowles, one of Britain's most famous self-taught gardeners. After you've explored the eight acres of charming grounds, why not relax in the Bowles Tea Room? Garden entry is free. Visit website for more information.

OPEN: Daily from 10am-5pm or dusk if earlier.





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Buller's Way, Abbotsbury, nr. Weymouth, Dorset DT3 4LA
Tel: 44 (0)1305 871387 | Website: www.abbotsburygardens.co.uk

Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens on the Jurassic Coast near Weymouth in Dorset is considered one of the best in England - winner of the HHA/Christies Garden of the Year Award in 2012 and described by Alan Titchmarsh as 'one of the finest gardens I have ever visited'.

OPEN: Seven days a week from 10am, (except 20 December - 1 January).

CHIPPENHAM PARK

Chippenham, near Newmarket, Cambridgeshire CB7 5PT
Tel: 01638 721416 | www.chippenhamparkgardens.co.uk

Chippenham Park offers more than 300 acres of spectacular woodland, lakes and formal gardens. In February, much of the woodland walks are carpeted in a magnificent and abundant display of snowdrops and aconites, which have naturalised themselves in vast numbers. A mass of hellebores, fiery dogwoods and exceptional trees help make this a truly inspirational time to visit. Homemade soups and pork hot dogs, tea, coffee and other refreshments are available all day from a licensed tearoom.

OPEN: Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 30 January until 1 March, 10am-4pm, entry £5. See website for other opening dates throughout the year. Private tours by appointment - please call.





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Scholar Green, Cheshire ST7 3QP
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www.rodehall.co.uk

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OPEN: Snowdrop Walks 7 February - 8 March daily (except Mondays) 11am - 4pm.
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Email: info@springreachnursery.co.uk | Website: www.springreachnursery.co.uk
Spring Reach Nursery, Long Reach, Ockham, Surrey GU23 6PG

3 BUCKINGHAM NURSERIES





Buckingham Nurseries was established in 1946 and has been supplying excellent quality plants to customers throughout the country ever since. It's 2014/15 catalogue lists a good range of hedging plants, young trees, soft and top fruit, climbers, roses and ground cover plants. The Garden Centre also has an extensive range of container grown plants, an aquatics and poultry section, a large garden shop and a very popular coffee shop and restaurant.

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Email: info@plantsforshade.co.uk | Website: www.plantsforshade.co.uk
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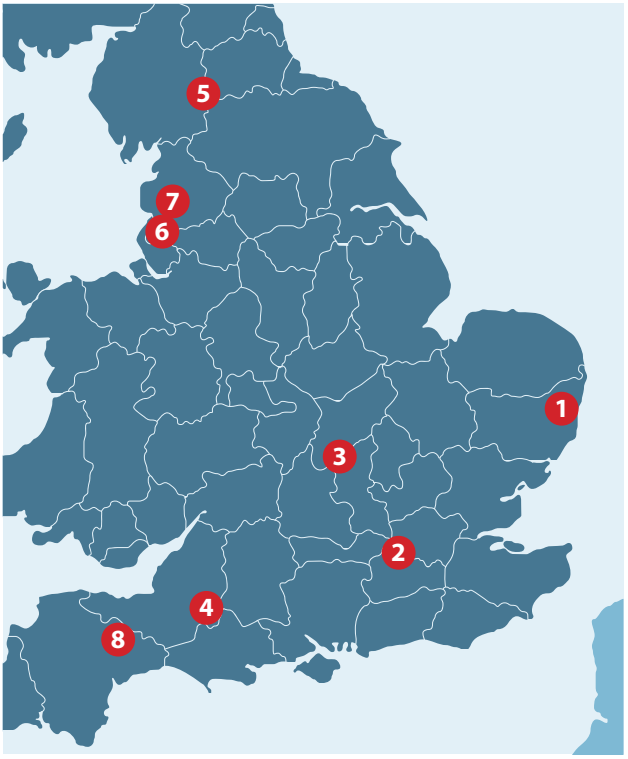
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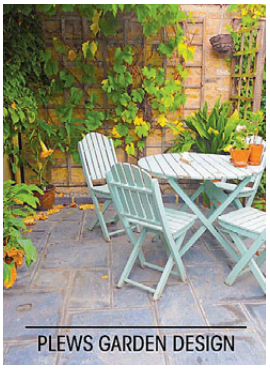


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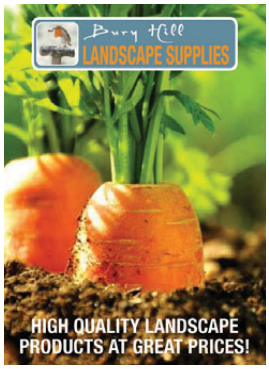
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Coming clean



It's time to tidy up the garden for spring, so our working gardener must run a gamut of weeds, mud and terrifying power tools

March is the perfect time for spring cleaning, and in the garden that mostly means weeding. We weed the beds and borders for hours, days, weeks; down on our hands and knees with tool of choice and bucket to one side.

If you get to the tool shed first in the morning, you might grab the one kneeler that is left. Some people have even been known to hide this from the rest of us last thing in the evening, which is devious, but understandable. We all creak and ache from crouching on the cold earth for so long, and try in vain to chase the damp from our bones with frequent hot-chocolate breaks.

Some weeds, like creeping clover in particular, are problems in certain areas, such as between the cobblestones on the paths. Having tried dumping vats of boiling water, and then boiling water with salt on them, as well as spraying weed killer, I have resorted back to hand weeding them too. It is time-consuming, but has to be done in time for opening the garden in April, so occasionally we'll have a weeding party in the evening with outdoor lights on, and cans of beer for everyone who volunteers. We sing songs to rally our spirits, changing the words to amuse ourselves.

When I get home, I find mud hiding in crevices I didn't even know I had - baths, showers and washing machines are ill-equipped to deal with sticky clay. Towels and door mats become disposable items. A dark line develops under my fingernails that will not shift for the entire season.

Showers and washing machines are ill-equipped to deal with sticky clay. Towels and door mats become disposable items

But it is worth it to get everything up to scratch for opening day, when we unlatch the gates and let people in to see all the hard work we have done over winter - the weeding, the pruning, the painting and planting, the cleaning and building, the endless lawn edging. One woman last year sought me out after her visit to tell me how much she had enjoyed the garden. 'I love how it is not so perfectly manicured here,' she exclaimed. 'It's not?' I asked, crestfallen.

I can take this sort of thing better than He Who Must Be Obeyed, who will often be found after open days doing helpfully destructive things like drilling, clipping, shredding and pruning with power tools to chase off the indignity. I stay away, as the sound of a chainsaw always makes me shudder.

This is not due to silly horror movie fears, but a very real near-disaster with a falling tree limb and my life flashing before my eyes. After the adrenaline subsided, I decided not to spot people on ladders with chainsaws anymore.

HWMBO, however, put the whole incident down to bad luck, and still happily struts about the place with it, making noise. In fact, he has an unhealthy love of the monster, getting it serviced so regularly I think the lawnmower must be jealous.

He once suggested that we have a party at Halloween, so he could chase people around the garden with it for fun, revving the motor to make them scream. It is thoughts like this (and when he ponders the hilarity level of pretending to run over his foot with the lawnmower, and using a tin of tomatoes to realistic effect) that make me glad we are still closed to the public - they are safe, for another month at least. ◆



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